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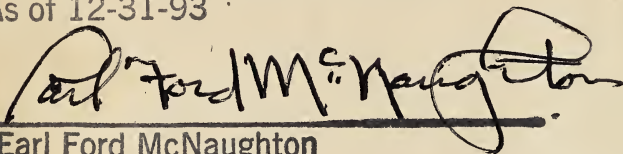
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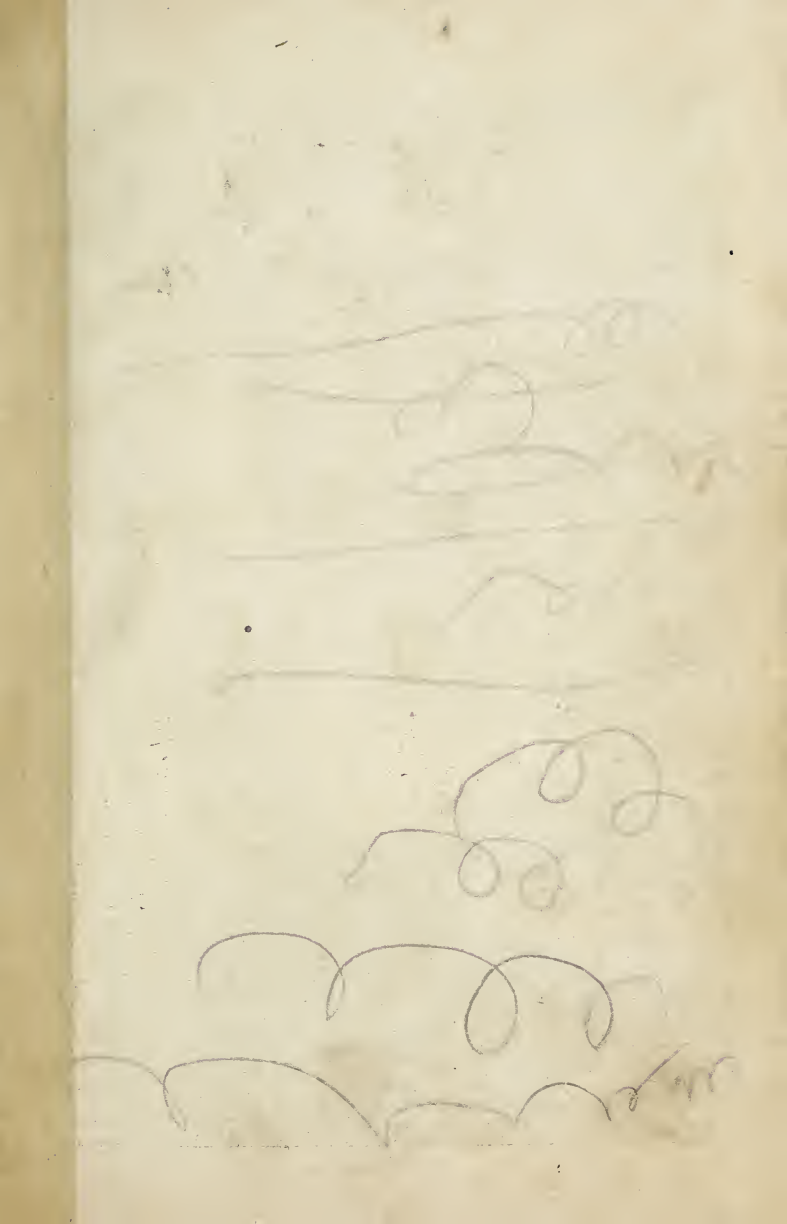
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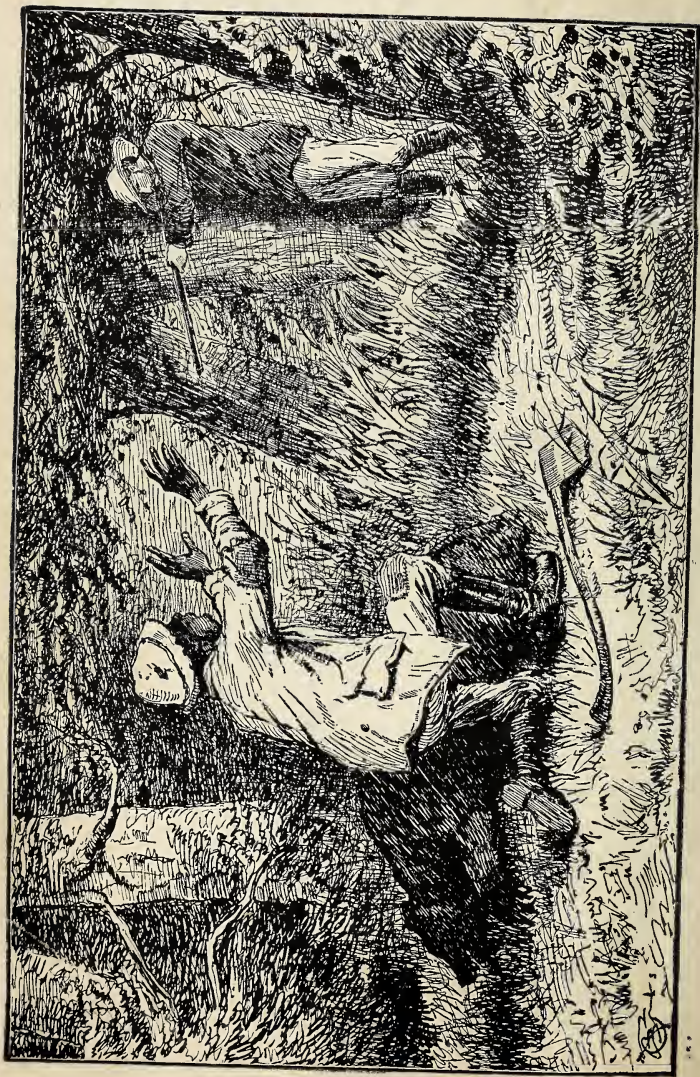
Earl Ford McNaughton



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"DON'T SHOOT, MASSA, I GUV UP." Page 38.

LIVE BOYS IN THE BLACK HILLS

OR
THERESA, - NEW YORK

THE YOUNG TEXAN GOLD HUNTERS

M 74

A Narrative

IN CHARLEY'S OWN LANGUAGE, DESCRIBING THEIR ADVENTURES DURING A SECOND TRIP OVER THE GREAT TEXAS CATTLE TRAIL, THEIR FORTUNE AS GOLD HUNTERS, THEIR LIFE AMONG THE MINERS, AND THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH THE INDIANS, CUT SHORT BY CHARLEY'S SUDDEN AND UNACCOUNTABLE DISAPPEARANCE IN THE NIGHT DURING A SNOW-STORM

GIVEN IN LETTERS TO

ARTHUR MORECAMP

AUTHOR OF "LIVE BOYS IN TEXAS."



BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK
CHARLES T. DILLINGHAM

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Dedication.

TO

WILLY GAUTRY McINTYRE.



PREFACE.

THE following pages are offered to the readers of "Live Boys in Texas," in the belief that they will be interested in again following the adventurous career of Charley and Nasho. With the exception of the first and last chapters, they are entirely in Charley's language. Though as unable as his wondering companions to account for the manner of his sudden disappearance, I feel sure that he is still living. Indeed, I fully expect that he will ere-long again appear, and perhaps recount for us the adventures of his life among the hostile Indians of the Far West, into whose hands I am confident he has fallen.

ARTHUR MORECAMP.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

- The Last Will and Testament of Hugh Minton. Buried
Treasure. Wanted, a Friend. Off for Casa de Bueyes. 11

CHAPTER II.

- Found, a Friend. A Hunt in the Bresada. A Series of
Surprises. War in the Swamp 27

CHAPTER III.

- Old Steve's Story. Capt. Dick was Treed by Mexican Hogs.
Back to the Ranch with Meat and Skins 39

CHAPTER IV.

- On the Cattle Trail Again. A Bad Stampede. Taking Water
in the Dark. Gen. Foote Loses his Horse by Drowning . 53

CHAPTER V.

- Lynch Law. Stopping a Hanging. How we came by Cracklins, 63

CHAPTER VI.

- How Cracklins got his Name. Camp Talk 78

CHAPTER VII.

- Run Over by Buffaloes. A Torn-up Camp. Nothing to Eat
but Buffalo Meat, and no Bedding. Nearly Three Hundred
Head of Cattle Gone 88

CHAPTER VIII.

- On Trail of the Runaways. An Old Buffalo Bull. Finding the Drove. Cutting out the Cattle. Buffaloes Stampede again 102

CHAPTER IX.

- A Norther. Buffalo Meat for Supper, and Buffalo Hides for Bedclothes. A Hunter's Camp. Making Wolf-Skin Overcoats. A Hard Drive. Back to Camp again . . . 112

CHAPTER X.

- Palmetto Charley's Story. How he was Captured by the Indians after a Stampede, and Turned Loose Naked, and how he Got Even with them 124

CHAPTER XI.

- Turning Over the Herd. A Talk about our Trip. Charley Receives Two Fine Rifles. On the Road 132

CHAPTER XII.

- A Night Shot. Killing an Antelope. A Camp Stew. Prairie Dogs. Talk about Wolves 145

CHAPTER XIII.

- Pictures in Cheyenne. A Row at a Dance-House. Capt. Dick Has to Capture a Policeman 158

CHAPTER XIV.

- A Queer Speculation. Capt. Dick Don't Like it, but finally agrees. "Two Wagon-Loads of Music Wrapped Up in Cat-Fur" 172

CHAPTER XV.

- Scenery on the Route. Chimney Rock. Old Fort Laramie. The English Flag and the Englishman under it. Fellow-Travellers. Lonely Graves 185

CHAPTER XVI.

- Little Chance for Hunting. A Stranger in Camp. "Where Were you Raised?" A Talk about Indians. Two Sides to the Question 197

CHAPTER XVII.

- A Horse-Thief Caught. What Shall Be Done with Him? Charley Kills two Elks, and Finds a Wounded Indian . . . 209

CHAPTER XVIII.

- The Indian's Costume. Charley and Nasho to Stay with the Warrior, and Capt. Dick to Go on to Deadwood. Black-foot Chief 218

CHAPTER XIX.

- The Indian Recovers his Senses. Life in Camp. Learning Indian. Charley Kills a Mountain Lion, and Gets a Lesson from him in Hunting. Comanche's Adventure with Wolves, 232

CHAPTER XX.

- A Visit from Pawnee Soldiers. They Want to Shoot the Black-foot. "Leave!" Camp Broken up, and Start for the Hills. A Terrible Tragedy. Burying the Dead 241

CHAPTER XXI.

- Reach Deadwood. A Hearty Welcome from Capt. Dick. The Cat Speculation a Success. News about the Diggings. The Road Agents. The Indians. Cracklins's Opinion . . . 251

CHAPTER XXII.

- Studying Directions. Following up the Trail. Three Points Made, and a Dead Halt. The Landmark Gone. Charley Takes a Careful Study over it. Buried under a Land-Slide, 264

CHAPTER XXIII.

- Laying Out the Digging. Division of Work. A Bargain with Cracklins. Charley put on Guard. He Does not Like his Work. An Important Position. The Night-Guards . . 276

CHAPTER XXIV.

- Capt. Dick Spends Sunday in Deadwood. What Came of it . 288

CHAPTER XXV.

- Striking Rock. Blasting. The Rock-Puncher Quits Work. Finding Gold-Dust that they Did not Come to look for. Whose is it? 302

CHAPTER XXVI.

- Capt. Dick Agrees to Go Indian Ranging. He Finds the Buried Gold-Dust. Caching it. Fifty Thousands Dollars, and no Richer 315

CHAPTER XXVII.

- Cracklins Strikes an Old Tunnel. Old Relics. A Rich Mine. The Original Black Hill Miners. An Attempt to Steal their Tunnel. How to Get it back 327

CHAPTER XXVIII.

- Charley Stampedes the Thieves out of the Tunnel. The Crowd from Deadwood. Charley Tells his Story. Three Cheers for Capt. Charley. The Thieves Given until Sundown to Leave 337

CHAPTER XXIX.

- Charley Makes Good their Claim. Capt. Dick's Return. Plans for the Future. His Last Letter 351

CHAPTER XXX.

- Yellowstone Kelly's Account of a Big Indian Fight. Capt. Charley Fights like a Veteran. A Tight Place. The Party Come back and Report Charley Missing in a Snow-Storm at Night. What Has Become of him? 357.

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LIVE BOYS IN THE BLACK HILLS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF HUGH LENTON.

**DO NOT
TURN DOWN LEAVES
NOR MARK
IN THIS BOOK.**

"*Dear Sir,* — Your letter telling us about Uncle Hugh's death came yesterday, and made us feel so

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CHAPTER XXIV.

- Capt. Dick Spends Sunday in Deadwood. What Came of it . . . 288

CHAPTER XXV.

- Striking Rock. Blasting. The Rock-Puncher Quits Work. Finding Gold-Dust that they Did not Come to look for. Whose is it? 302

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LIVE BOYS IN THE BLACK HILLS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF HUGH LENTON.
BURIED TREASURE. WANTED, A FRIEND. OFF
FOR CASA DE BUEYES.

ONE rainy day, about the middle of February, when I was strong enough to be able to stump about house and yard pretty freely, Charley asked me to walk out to the crib with him. We seated ourselves on the corn,—not a very comfortable seat; and amid the rain that now drizzled gently, and so softly that it was scarce heard, and again came down with such a clashing and pattering that it almost drowned our voices, he took from his pocket an envelope addressed in a delicate, but neat, though somewhat uneven form, and laid before me the following letter:—

“ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, Jan. 25, 1877.

“MR. CHARLES ZANCO,

“*Kerrville, Texas:*

“*Dear Sir,*—Your letter telling us about Uncle Hugh’s death came yesterday, and made us feel so

sorry. You don't know how much trouble we have had since we saw you at Philadelphia. Dear Uncle William took cold and was sick two months, and died, and it 'most killed Auntie. You can't know how good and kind he was to Auntie and me. And then Auntie found that Uncle had gone security, I think that 's what she said, for Mr. Castlemayer, and she would have to pay the money that Mr. Castlemayer owed, and it took almost everything we had. Auntie had to give up our pretty home with the flower-garden and orchard, and barn, and everything, and rent a little poor house, with poor furniture, where we live now. I would n't mind that, though it's so different from our pretty, nice home, if Uncle could only be with us, and Auntie be happy again. I do feel so bad to see Auntie look so bad and cry so much. Auntie has to teach in the public school here to get something for us to live on. I wish I could help her, but I am such a little girl I cannot do anything but help wash the dishes, and dust, and I am learning to sew. I shall be so glad when I get bigger, so that I can teach too, and help Auntie more.

"Poor Uncle Hugh. We were so sorry to learn of his death. Auntie cried so much over your letter, and I did too. I don't remember ever seeing Uncle Hugh. He went away when I was such a little girl, and he has never been back since. He was Auntie's brother, and she loved him so much. Auntie has often told me about him. Auntie said it was a great relief to her to know that somebody was with him

when he was so sick, and took care of him, and she knew you did everything for him that you could do. Auntie says that if you are only a boy in years, you are more of a man than many grown men, and I think so too, though you didn't seem like anything but a boy to me at Philadelphia.

"I know Auntie intends answering your letter, but she has so much to do, and feels so badly, that she has not done it yet. She said I might write to you. I do not like to trouble her more than I can help, so I am not going to show her this letter. If there is anything wrong about it, I know you will excuse it, because I never wrote one before.

"Your little friend,

"MARION LENTON."

When I had finished reading it, he handed me another paper on foolscap, with a large, red seal at the bottom. It was written in a coarse hand, and ran as follows:—

"THE STATE OF KANSAS,
"COUNTY OF FORD.

"*Know all men by these presents:* That I, Hugh Lenton, believing myself to be on my death-bed, but in sound mind, and having full control of all my faculties, do solemnly make this my last will and testament, which I wish and desire to be carefully executed according to the provisions therein contained, to wit:—

“1st. I hereby declare that I owe no man anything.

“2d. That I have no property, except a deposit, the nature and locality of which is described in a paper I have placed in the hands of Charles Zanco, with instructions relative thereto.

“3d. In the event that the said Charles Zanco should recover the said deposit, then it is to be equally divided between Marion Lenton, only daughter of Wallace Lenton deceased, now living with her uncle, William J. Lenton, in the town of St. Paul, Minnesota, the said Marion Lenton being my niece, and, with the exception of my sister, Lydia J. Lenton, wife of said William J. Lenton, my nearest surviving relative, and the said Charles Zanco; my reason for making the said Charles Zanco my heir equal with her, the said Marion Lenton, being that the said Charles Zanco found me here in an exhausted and unconscious condition, from which I should never have aroused but for his prompt assistance; that he has given me every attention that could have been bestowed by a brother; that my gratitude prompts me to render this token of my appreciation of his unselfish devotion, and for the further reason that the said Charles Zanco must, of necessity, incur considerable expense and much personal hazard in the recovery of the said deposit, for which common justice requires that he be fairly remunerated.

“4th. That though so lately a stranger to me, I have the utmost confidence both in the capacity and

integrity of the said Charles Zanco, and for that reason, and because by so doing, I believe I shall most certainly secure for my beloved niece, the aforesaid Marion Lenton, her share of the deposit above alluded to, I do hereby constitute the said Charles Zanco my sole executor of this my last will and testament, and have already intrusted him with my papers and given him my instructions, and it is my earnest wish that no bond shall be required of him, and that no obstacle, of any nature whatever, shall be placed in the way of his execution of the aforementioned trust.

"In testimony of all of which, I do hereby set my hand to this my last will and testament, in presence of the witnesses whose signatures I have requested in attestation of this my free and unbiassed act. Executed at Fort Dodge, Kansas, this the fourth day of December, 1876.

"HUGH LENTON.

"Witness :

"AARON LOGAN, Esq.,

"Attorney for Testator.

"WESLEY S. CHAMPLIN,

"Pastor Presbyterian Church, Fort Dodge, Kansas."

"THE STATE OF KANSAS,

"COUNTY OF FORD.

"Personally appeared before me, Ezra Penn, Notary Public in and for said county, Rev. Wesley S. Champlin, to me well known, and a resident citizen of said county and State, who, being by me duly sworn,

saith that he was a witness to the execution of the above and foregoing document, and that he signed his name thereto as witness, at the instance and request of the said testator, Hugh Lenton.

"In witness whereof, I hereto set my hand and official seal, this the fourth day of January, 1876.

"EZRA PENN,

" L. S.]

Notary Public."

"You see from that, Mr. Morecamp, that I have the right to try and find that deposit. I would n't tell anybody but you anything about it; somehow I don't even feel like saying anything to Uncle and Auntie or Parson Theglin about it. I am just as sure as can be that neither of them would ever say anything about it, but somehow it seems to me that this is a matter between Miss Marion Lenton and myself, that no one else ought to know anything about. I am talking to you about it because I want you to tell me what is the best way to do.

"Mr. Hugh Lenton gave me a paper with a little map drawn with ink on it, telling just where the deposit was, and told me, too, as well as he could, all about it. I would show you the paper, but I have n't got it with me, and we could n't tell anything about it here. It won't be any use until I get on the ground, and then from the description and map, and what he told me, I am certain I can find it.

"He told me he had been mining for several years, but without much success until the winter of 1875

and 1876, when he was prospecting with a small party in the Big Horn mountains. One day he was out by himself, and found, as he was satisfied, a valuable platinum mine, from which he took about ten pounds of ore. He did n't tell any of his companions about it, because he knew it would take money and machinery to work it. The Indians had been very bad above them, and that night a party of miners who had been prospecting farther up the mountains came to their camp and told them Sitting Bull and a large band of warriors were coming down the Big Horn Valley, and they had better all leave for their lives. They left, and he staid at Bismarck awhile, hoping he could go back, until the Custer massacre, and then he was certain there would n't be any more chance that year, and he went to the Black Hills and worked a placer claim on French Creek. He took out about \$11,000, but about that time Deadwood began to be all the attraction, and the French Creek diggings were almost deserted. The Indians got so bad they were afraid to stay. He buried his gold-dust in a safe place, for he said it was as safe there as anywhere, and went to Deadwood, but he did n't have much luck there. He worked on till winter, and then started to Texas, because he was afraid to stay up there through the winter, on account of his health. At the station above Fort Dodge, where he stopped over one train, he was drugged and robbed of everything, even his clothes, and found himself at Fort Dodge, without knowing how he got there; and if I had n't found him somebody

would have found his papers on his body, and most likely have found his money, and his niece never would have got any of it.

“You can see from that letter that they need it badly now, and I am very anxious to find it, so they won’t be so poor. Now my plan is to wait until spring, and the snow is off the ground, and then go by rail to the nearest point to the Black Hills, and there buy an outfit and go to French Creek, and hunt for the buried money. If I find that, then I will take it to Mrs. Lenton for Marion, only keeping enough to go to the Big Horn mountains and hunt for the mine there. Nasho will go with me, and I think we can make our way.”

“Your plan is a pretty good one, Charley, but I am afraid it is rather a risky trip for you and Nasho to undertake by yourselves. I have a great deal of confidence in you boys, — you have shown yourselves well able to take care of yourselves; but you must remember you will have to go among the wildest set of men you have ever seen, men who are many of them half crazy in their thirst for gold. Worse than the miners are the desperadoes and cut-throats, who always follow mining camps, to gamble, steal, and rob whenever they get a chance. Instead of finding friends, as you did on your trip to the Centennial, you must expect to treat every man you meet as a suspicious character, whom you would not have known your business for anything. You will not only have to depend entirely upon yourselves, but you will

have to keep a close watch on others. I do not say that there are not good men in the mines; I have no doubt there are many, very many: but you will not know who they are, and you will not dare talk with men there as you would elsewhere. Besides that, there are plenty of men who would no more hesitate to cut your throats for your money, if you should find it, and they learn that you had it, than they would hesitate to shoot a deer for dinner. Now, with all you boys' knowledge of wild life, and ability to take care of yourselves, I do not think you are able to deal with such men. There is risk, too, from the Indians."

"But, Mr. Morecamp, I see by the newspapers that almost all the Indians have come in and surrendered, and had their horses and arms taken away, and the rest have scattered about. The troops are after them, and the officers think those that do not come in and surrender will have to go into British America. They say this will be the last great Indian war."

"Yes, Charley, but you must remember there are a great many Indians, and the country is wide. There is no security that the Indians that were friendly last year will be this, and even among them some of them are continually slipping away on hunting parties, as they say, and robbing and murdering whenever they have a chance. You must calculate on trouble from the Indians, and as most of the miners have left French Creek, you will find few there, and you and Nasho are not strong enough to

protect yourselves against them. Further, you may have a good deal of digging to do in your search, and neither of you are able to do much at that. You are not strong enough. It takes weight to drive a pick-axe into the rocky ground where you will have to search. Now, you want some older friend, — a man of strength, and accustomed to wild life, and one whom you can trust entirely, whom you know will deal fairly by you after you find your money. Do you know of such a friend?"

"Mr. Morecamp, why can't you go with us? Your leg will be well by that time, and I would so much like to have you go."

"For some reasons, Charley, I would like to go but I cannot. As you know, my health is not very good, and I am afraid to risk that kind of life. Then I am not strong enough for the labor of digging. And further, I have just received letters from home that make it necessary for me to return there as soon as the weather grows warm enough."

"I am *real* sorry you can't go."

"For some reasons it would be very pleasant. I should enjoy camping out very much, but it is out of the question. You must think of some one else."

"Why not ask Uncle if he would n't go?"

"Your uncle is too old for such a trip as that. He would be very unwilling to leave your aunt, and the money he would receive would not pay him for the risks he would run, and the hardships he would have to undergo."

"Why, Mr. Morecamp, it don't seem to me camp-life is much of a hardship when you have a good wagon, and a tent, and plenty to eat."

"Not to you boys, I admit; not to stout, hearty men, certainly, but it is different with a man of your uncle's age and habits of life. He would miss his chimney corner, and his home comforts, and regular life, more than you have any idea of. I believe he would be willing to go on your account, to get your share of the money, but I do not think you ought to ask it of him."

"Oh, Mr. Morecamp, I would n't think of asking him on my account."

"I knew you would n't, Charley. I only wanted to set you thinking about the matter, and about your uncle. Who else is there you can trust? Remember, it must be a true friend."

"Oh, I know! Capt. Dick! Capt. Dick is the very man, if he will go. I do hope he will."

"You are sure you can trust Capt. Dick?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I would trust Capt. Dick with anything in the world."

"Well, if Capt. Dick will go there are other things that must be considered. First, this is a very uncertain undertaking. You may spend your money, and your time and labor, and get nothing in return. However willing you may be to do this, you must not expect any one else to be equally ready. If Capt. Dick will go at all, I think it most likely he will prefer to go over the Trail again, at least as far as the

Kansas Pacific road. In this way he will diminish the expense, and make something to go upon. And you cannot expect any one else to undertake a trip of this kind, without a certainty of good pay, if it is successful. By the will of Hugh Lenton you will be entitled to one half of his money, if you find it, and your companion will doubtless demand that he shall share equally with you."

"I did n't want to take any for myself, more than to pay expenses, but I am willing to pay Capt. Dick out of my share, if he will go. I want to have as much as I can left for Miss Marion and her aunt, because they need it so much more than I do. I know Capt. Dick will be ready to do whatever is right."

"Then you intend to ask Capt. Dick to go with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, the sooner the better, because he may make arrangements for the whole year that will render it impossible for him to go with you. How will you let him know?"

"I will go down to Casa de Bueyes and see him. Talking with him will be a great deal better than writing."

"Will you be willing to go over the Trail again with him?"

"Yes, sir. I do not like to take so much time, but if he thinks that will be best, I'll do it."

"When will you start?"

"This is Friday. I ought to go Monday, but I haven't said anything to Uncle about it yet. Mr. Morecamp, I hardly know why I don't like to say anything to Uncle about this trip, but I don't. Won't you please tell him enough about why I want to go so he will understand, and ask him if I may go, for me?"

"I would do it in a minute for you, Charley, but I don't think that is the right way. I think I know how you feel about it, but just go to your uncle like a man, and tell him about it, and I am certain he will give his consent, and he will think all the more of you for doing so. Boys make great mistakes in not going to their fathers about things that concern them oftener than they do. Your uncle is in the house now, and it is a good time to talk to him about it. Whenever you have anything to do that is not very pleasant, the sooner it is done the better. Come and let me know when you are through."

I was sitting in the gallery reading, an hour later, when Charley came to me with a bright face, but one that showed a great deal of seriousness underneath its brightness. I laid aside my book, and said, "Well, Charley?"

"I can go! Mr. Morecamp, I can go!" he said eagerly. "Uncle did not like my being away from him again for so long a time, and he is anxious for me to be at school, but after I had told him all about it, he said, much as he hated to have me leave him, I ought to go; I have no right to trust anybody else

with such business. I might be willing to risk my own part of it, but I had no right to risk Marion's."

"But is he not afraid to have you undertake a trip where there may be so much danger?"

"He spoke of that, too, Mr. Morecamp, but Uncle thinks nobody has any right to stand back whenever it is their duty to do anything. He says this is my duty, and that God can and will take care of me on the trip. He says a man had better be killed doing his duty, than live to be a hundred years old skulking out of it like a coward."

"And he is right, Charley. Never shrink where duty calls. When do you start?"

"Monday morning, sir."

"And Nasho?"

"I have n't said anything to him about it, but I know he'll go. He'd go anywhere with me."

"You won't be back again before you leave for the Black Hills?"

"No, sir. I will leave ready to go over the Trail with Capt. Dick, and it won't be worth while to come back again, because he will likely start in March."

"Well, Charley, I shall miss you a great deal. I won't be here long myself. Let me make a few suggestions to you. When you get through, get one or two books that will tell you about mining, where gold is most likely to be found, how to look for it, and how to mine it."

"I have done that already, sir. I thought about that at Fort Dodge, after the funeral, and I wrote

to a book-house in New York to send me the best book on that subject, and I got it two weeks ago, and have nearly finished it."

"That was very well thought of. Of course, when you get to the Hills, you will have a chance to see others mining, and ask them about it. Now another thing; I will give you a blank-book, and pocket pen, and inkstand, and I want you every day to set down whatever you think would be interesting to me. Tell me about the country you pass over, the people you meet, and any little things out of the way that happen on the trip. Notice carefully the kinds of grass, the flowers, the trees, the animals, and set down all about your hunting adventures, for I expect you will have more opportunities to hunt than you did before. Learn to keep your eyes open, and see all that is to be seen, and then learn to write it out so that it will be interesting to others. And, Charley, take a grammar with you, and study it, and try and speak more correctly. You won't think hardly of me for speaking of this?"

"Oh, no, sir. I am glad you did. I know I don't speak right, but it is hard when hardly anybody about you does, and would only laugh at you if they knew you were trying to do better. And I won't have much time to study on the Trail. But I'll get a grammar at San Antonio, as we go through, and study when I can. I am afraid I won't be able to write anything that will be interesting to you, but I'll do the best I can."

"Thank you, Charley. I shall be satisfied if you do that, and I have no fear that it will not be interesting to me. Being a scholar won't prevent you from lassoing an unruly ox, if it is necessary, or killing a deer or elk. Make the very best traveler of yourself you can. First, see all there is to be seen, and then tell it in the most interesting manner that you can."

Monday morning, early, Charley and Nasho were ready. After a hearty shake of the hand, and earnest good-by, they mounted, Charley on Comanche, Nasho on Spot, while Rover bounded gayly along ahead, and we soon lost sight of them down the road.

After my return home I received an occasional letter from Charley, informing me of his movements. A few weeks ago I received a letter announcing his arrival at home, and with it his journal, kept at my request, from which I have compiled the following narrative of his travels and adventures. My readers will bear in mind that this journal was often addressed directly to me, as in letter-writing; and I have endeavored, as far as possible, to preserve Charley's style and exact language.

CHAPTER II.

FOUND —A FRIEND. A HUNT IN THE BRESADA. A
SERIES OF SURPRISES. WAR IN THE SWAMP.

CASA DE BUEYES, REFUGIO CO., TEXAS,
March 10, 1877.

WE had a pleasant trip to Casa de Bueyes. Found Capt. Dick just about starting West for a drove of beeves. He was real glad to see us, and thought, of course, we had come to go with him over the trail again. I spent all that evening with him, telling him about our trip back. He seemed real glad that the Indians did not get us, and that we got back all safe. Then I told him what I had come for, and asked him if he would go with me, telling him I would give him one half of my share if we succeeded in finding the buried gold. He said of course he would go with me; that he had not engaged to go further than Ellis, though he was in no special hurry to get back. I can see he has not a great deal of confidence in finding it, but I believe he would go with me even if he was sure we would n't. I don't believe he would go with anybody else. I do like Capt. Dick. I showed him my plots of the places

where the gold is buried and the mine is, and told him what Mr. Lenton had told me. He said they were very plain,—that is, the one where the gold was,—and it looked like one could go right to the very place, but it might be very different when we got there. He said he had tried that many a time in finding places from directions that had been given him, and there were not many men could direct a body so that they could find a place if there was more than one road, or it was hard to find. He said, though, he believed we could find it if anybody could, and if he didn't know anything about mining he reckoned he could learn; and if he and I and Nasho couldn't take care of ourselves in the Black Hills, or any other seaport, he didn't know who could. I am real glad he is going with me. We bought two more horses apiece, and went on the drive Monday morning. The night we got back, a man stopped at the ranch who was just from the Black Hills. He says there are about seven thousand people there, but they haven't found hardly any gold, that the placer diggings are not worth much, and that it will take a great deal of money to mine the gold out of the quartz. He didn't have much faith in the gold digging, but said, somebody would make money selling the miners beef. If the Indians are as bad as he says they are, we may look out for trouble, but I reckon we can go through if anybody can. Capt. Dick says we won't buy our outfit to start for the Hills until we get through with the cattle. We

have our horses, — we won't find any better ones than Comanche and Beelzebub and Spot anywhere, — and revolvers, and horse equipments, and we will get whatever else we want when we get through. I sold my Evans rifle at Kerrville to a man who was going to El Paso, but I have a beautiful new ivory-handled revolver that uncle gave me. It has my name in silver letters in the handle. Uncle don't believe in boys having pistols, but he said I needed to be well armed on such a trip as this. He gave Nasho one of the finest hunting-knives I ever saw. Capt. Dick was real glad to get the field-glass I bought him. He says it makes a long-range rifle out of his eyes. I have my little pocket revolver, too, and we are going to take Rover.

Drovers hardly ever will have a dog along, but he is so well trained, and minds so well, that Capt. Dick says we will risk taking him. He will have to stay with the wagon, though.

We got back from the drive out West early Friday morning. That day, at dinner, Capt. Dick proposed that we have a hunt in the Bresada, Saturday. I was glad to go. Nasho said he did n't want to go; he wanted to finish a rope he had begun before we started out West. There was a rifle and a shot-gun at the ranch. Capt. Dick said he would take the shot-gun, as there were some buckshot cartridges to go with it. I was glad to take the rifle, because I like it best. You have to hold a rifle steadier, and be more particular to get a good sight, but then

when you hit you are most sure to kill. It seems to me there is something so sure about a rifle. I didn't take my revolver, because it would be too heavy with the other things. I had my little revolver, though ; I carry that all the time.

We were up before day, and reached the Bresada, about sun-up. We made some coffee, and got some breakfast. Capt. Dick said, "We will leave our horses staked here, Charley, and go in by separate paths. There is a path nearly a mile from here, that strikes in south ; this one goes in north, and I think they both meet at a lake about two miles in. It's been a long time since I have been in, and it's grown up a great deal since then. Keep your eye skinned, Charley, and your gun ready, and if you want me any time, fire your pistol three times, as fast as you can pull trigger. There's turkey and deer and wild cattle and hogs, and a few stray bear, and I expect a panther or so, to say nothing of partridges and rabbits and coons, and such like small game. We'll meet at the lake at twelve. Good luck to you !"

"The same to you, Capt. Dick."

He started off for the other path, and I trailed my rifle and struck into the thicket. At the edge it was mostly chaparral and mesquite, with a good deal of prickly pear, but when I got into it I found there were a good many large trees, and the underbrush was larger and thicker. Most of the trees were full of moss, that often hung down in long bunches, and their bark was often covered with a sort of moss.

The vines didn't seem bright and lively, like they generally do in the bottoms, but hung to the trees, as if they were about to fall off. In a good many places it was wet and swampy, covered with rush-grass and water plants, that made me think there must be snakes in them. Sometimes the thicket was open, so I could go anywhere I wanted, and sometimes it was so thick I had to keep to the path. I jumped lots of partridges and rabbits, but I didn't want to shoot at them, for fear it would spoil my chances for deer, or larger game. Once I saw three coons, nearly grown, running and playing with each other over a mossy tree, and stood and watched them awhile, but I didn't shoot. I didn't go but a little piece further, before I come as near as could be stepping on a big highland moccasin. I jumped back, and could hardly keep from holloing; but just as I was going to hollo, I happened to think how if I was in the Indian country, and managed to shut down on it. I got a stick and killed him. I do despise snakes. There is something so slimy and disgusting about them, and you never know where you are going to find one, and may 'most step on him before you see him. I hate to touch one, but I kill every one I get a chance at, except the king snake. I don't believe they ever bite anybody, because I played with one once, and he never tried to bite me at all. They are little snakes, about as long as my arm, or hardly so long, and not as big as my thumb, but they can kill rattlesnakes.

I hate a moccasin worse than any kind of snake. There is something nasty-looking about them, and they've got the meanest eye, and they'll lay right still and let you almost step on them without moving, and they'll bite before you can get out of the way.

I was walking along quietly in a very thick part of the thicket where I could n't see hardly any distance on either side of the path, when I saw a rabbit come hopping along in it. When he saw me, he darted into the bushes. The path turned square to the right, and just as I turned the elbow, a big wolf almost jumped on me. Rover was right behind me, and bounced him. They rolled over and over. I wanted to shoot, but was afraid to, for fear of hitting Rover. In less than half a minute Rover got him by the throat. The wolf gave a sort of little squeal, but each one was fainter and fainter, and then he stretched out and was still. Rover had killed him. I think he was running on the rabbit's trail, trying to slip up on him, and did n't see me until he was right on me. I don't know whether Rover could have killed him or not, if he had not got a hold of the wolf before he knew it. Wolves snap so a dog can hardly ever catch hold of them. I was real glad he did n't get hurt.

I petted him a little, and then took a good look at the wolf. It was a big, black, lobos dog-wolf. He must have been an old one, for his teeth were worn down a good deal, but he was fatter than wolves generally are. I reckon he must have got plenty to eat.

A wolf ain't particular about his grub; he will eat anything comes in his way. I looked at his feet carefully, and then at Rover's, to see the difference between them, so I could tell a wolf's track from a dog's. The wolf's was larger, and spread out more, and his claws were longer and sharper. I think I can tell a wolf's track now when I see one. I kept going until I knew I had gone more than two miles; but I did not come to the lake. Every once in a while I would cross a path, but I never paid much attention to them. I found a bear track, but it did n't look very fresh, and I did n't think it was worth while to follow it up. It looks almost like a man's track barefoot, only it is flatter, and has claws. Then I started a flock of turkeys, but they saw me as quick as I did them, and were off in the bushes before I could shoot. I was n't sorry much, because, if I had shot, it might have scared off other game.

I kept wondering why I did n't come to the lake. I knew I had n't been travelling in a circle, because I had kept watch on the sun, and guided myself by that. I crossed another path, and kept on. Just then I happened to think that all the paths I had seen were going toward the same place, like the spokes of a wheel, and I felt sure they must all go to the lake. I thought it must be nearly eleven, and I concluded to go to the lake, and take a stand and watch for game. Sometimes you can find game better that way than by walking. When you are moving the game stands as good a chance to see you as

you do to see it, but when you are still you have the best chance. Sitting still in the woods, nothing can move anywhere near you without your seeing it, if you keep a close watch. You will often notice even a leaf falling.

I struck out along the path, but directly, I don't know what made me, turned out to one side, and went to a dense thicket about fifty yards to the right. There were two big trees, a pecan and a walnut, about ten feet apart, with a great deal of thick underbrush around. There was a path leading into it, and I went in. I had to stoop to go in. A little bed of ashes brought me up standing. I looked down, and there were foot tracks going both ways. How stupid I must have been not to have seen them before. Nice work that was for a boy that wanted to make a good hunter, running right into a camp with his eyes open, and never seeing a track. Whose camp was it, anyhow? There was a brush arbor made by laying a long stick against the pecan trees, about six feet from the ground, and propping it there with forked poles. It was covered with two cattle hides and brush. I felt sure there could n't be anybody there, for I could see through it, and, besides, Rover did n't make any noise. I went in. There was nothing in it but a bed made of dried moss, covered with a raw hide, and an old blanket and quilt, and an old pair of pants, a heavy coat, and a flannel shirt. There was a little sack of meal, and up in one corner were three plugs of tobacco, and a little bag of salt. Out-

side was a pole, with a fishing-line on it, and at the fireplace was a frying-pan and a skillet. There was a piece of meat hung up in a tree, but it looked old, and not fit to eat. None of the tracks were right fresh either, and no fire had been made since the last rain. So I knew from those signs that whoever lived in the camp had n't been to it lately. I left it, went back to the path, and pretty soon I came to the lake. It was about two hundred yards long and thirty broad. In some places the edge was covered with rushes and flags, but in others it was smooth and bare. There were a good many paths where the animals came down to drink. I saw lots of ducks at one end, but did n't trouble them. I picked out a good place under a thick yupon bush, where I could n't be seen easy, but could see all round, and set myself to watch. Just as I had got fairly settled I heard two shots right close together, but a long ways off, so far I just could hear them. I felt sure that was Capt. Dick, and I thought he would come in pretty soon with some game, and I did n't have any. I turned round to look across the lake, and while I was watching, an alligator's snout came up to the top of the water so easy that it hardly made a ripple. Then the top of his ugly head showed, and I could see his wicked green eyes blinking like a frog's. He kept right still for a few minutes, and I could have got a good shot at him, but he was n't fit to eat. I should rather have killed him than a deer, but I did n't want to shoot, for fear of scaring other

game. Directly he moved off slowly and easy into a patch of lilies and rushes, and I stopped watching him, and turned to the thicket again, the way I had come. There was n't a sound to be heard. Every thing was as quiet as on the prairie in August. I kept looking around in every direction, but without moving, and my eyes lit on a swamp-rabbit, stretched out in his form, under some bushes. His fur was so near the color of the dead leaves of his nest, that I don't think I would have noticed him if I had n't caught the shine of his big eyes. I wondered if he saw me. I don't think he did. He was as still as a stick. I could n't even see him breathe. I watched him a few minutes, and then turned toward the path again that came in from the other side of the lake. I was up near its head. Pretty soon I saw a deer coming along the path. I reckon he was coming to drink. He kept watching around on every side. Rover was lying down by me. He saw the deer, but he did n't move. The deer was in twenty yards of the edge of the lake, and near enough to shoot, but I knew he would come closer, and I wanted to make sure of him, so I held my rifle ready, and waited. He stopped to rub his horns against a big tree by the path. In a second something lit on his back, and both went to the ground together. The deer tried to get up, but could n't. He stretched out, kicked a time or two, and lay still. I knew he was dead, and could see now it was a panther had jumped on him out of the tree. He raised his head from the deer's

throat, all bloody. I was about to take aim at him, when I saw the panther turn half round, with one paw on the deer, and heard a low sound like an angry cat. His eyes flashed, and his tail kept moving from side to side. He was watching something coming. It was a black bear. He came trotting out of the thicket, but when he got in a few yards of the panther, he reared up on his hind feet, and walked toward him, showing his teeth, and growling. When he got pretty close, the panther slunk off to one side, and the bear went to the deer, and began tearing the hide with his teeth. In twisting round to get a good hold, he got his back to the panther, and in a second he lit on to him, and caught him by the back of the neck. The bear whirled over on his back, and shook the panther loose. Then he got his paws round his head, and caught it by the throat. They rolled and tumbled over and over, first one, and then the other, on top. The panther kept scratching the bear's belly with his hind feet, but the bear held on. I could see the panther was getting weaker and weaker, and then he was still. The bear worked himself loose, and raised himself upon all fours. His head was bloody, and there were long, bloody streaks down his belly, where the panther had scratched him, but he didn't seem to mind his wounds. He went back to the deer, and commenced tearing away again. I started to go round the lake to get a close shot, but stopped. I saw a negro come out of the thicket on the other side from where the bear had come. He

had an axe in his hand, and slipped along easy, so as to make no noise, and kept the tree between him and the bear, so he could n't see him. The bear was so busy he did n't notice him. He got to the tree, raised his axe, jumped out from behind it, and struck the bear a tremendous blow with the head of the axe on the back of his head. He fell, and the negro hit him another one, and that settled him. I saw the negro's teeth shine, and heard him say something, I could n't tell what. I knew he was glad he had killed the bear, and had plenty of meat. He stooped down over him, and was feeling his ribs. Something made him raise his head, and there stood Capt. Dick, with his gun drawn on him, not ten yards off. He threw up his hands, and I heard him say, —

“Don't shoot, massa. I guv up!”

CHAPTER III.

OLD STEVE'S STORY. CAPT. DICK WAS TREED BY
MEXICAN HOGS. BACK TO THE RANCH WITH
MEAT AND SKINS.

I STARTED as hard as I could go. I could hear Capt. Dick laughing as I ran. When I got there he was leaning on his gun, and the negro was still on his knees, with a half grin on his face, as if he did n't know whether to laugh or be afraid.

"Charley, did you ever see such hunting as this? Here comes a deer along, quiet and easy, for a drink, and stops to rub his horns, when Mr. Panther lights down on him like a duck on to a June bug, and Mr. Deer goes up. Mr. Bruin, lying out there in a hollow tree, hears the rumpus, and, coming up to see what was up, concludes he would like to have venison for dinner, and tells Mr. Panther to take a back seat till the second table. Mr. Panther steps back, but gets hungry, and can't wait, particularly seeing as he set the table, and had n't asked Mr. Bear, and had n't no remembrance of ever having took dinner with him, and while Mr. Bear is going for a choice loin steak, what does he do but light on top of his back, and lets in to tapping his jugular. Mr. Bear takes

him in hand, gets a fair hold on his throat and makes an air-hole in *his* jugular, and that lets Mr. Panther out of that feast. Mr. Bear goes back to his dinner, when up comes Mr. Darkey with an axe, drops it on his head, and lays him out in the cold. And now I reckon it's my time;" and he threw up his gun again, cocking it, and with his hand on the trigger.

"Don't shoot, massa, fur de good Lord's sake don't shoot."

Capt. Dick dropped his gun to the ground again, and stood leaning on it, laughing heartily.

"Just as you say, Mr. Sambo; I just thought I'd finish out the killing."

I felt ashamed of Capt. Dick. I saw he was only frightening the poor negro, but he did n't know, and was badly scared, and I thought it was a shame to scare him that way just for amusement.

The negro was still on his knees. His axe had fallen from his hands, and was lying across the dead bear, which was bleeding at the mouth. His clothes were torn, and so patched you could n't have told what color they was at first. He had a strip of tanned raw-hide around his pants for a belt, and no hat or shoes. His hands were still half raised, as if he was afraid if he let them fall Capt. Dick would shoot him, and yet he looked like he was just ready to burst into a laugh.

"Get up, Sambo, get up. I ain't going to hurt you. I reckon there's been killing enough for this morning. What are you doing here, anyhow?"

He got up and stood scratching his kinky head with one hand, as if he hardly knew what to do or say.

"I libs here, massa."

"The devil you do! Where 's your cabin?"

"'A'n't got none, sir; nofin' but jess a bresh arbor, wid some raw-hides ober it. Hit 's ober dere on toder side de lake, by a little dreen, but dere am nofin' in it but some ole close an' a little sumfin' ter ete. I knows you don't want dew, massa."

"Of course I don't. Dern your old duds! How long have you been here, anyhow?"

"'Most five years, sir."

"You have! What brought you here? Stole something and run away to keep out of the jug, did n't you, you old rascal?"

"No, massa. I've been in de jug, an' I sarved out my time dere, but ef you white men hed done justice by dis poor nigga, I neber wud 'a' went in dere. Massa, wud you like fer to be 'cused of stealin'?"

There was something about the negro's face that made me feel almost like crying. It was as if he had been used to being treated badly, and did n't expect anything else, but knew he did n't deserve it. He was n't sassy a bit, but it seemed like he was saying, "I have n't done anything to make me worse than you, and I don't know why I should be treated any less like a man than you."

"Well, I'd like to see the man that would do it. There'd be a funeral in that neighborhood dern'd

quick, an' I would n't furnish the corpse either, unless he happened to be quicker with his shootin'-irons than I was, an' he'd have to get up early in the mornin' for that."

"Well, massa, needer does I, but I'se only a poor nigga, an' ha'n't got no shootin'-irons, an' ef I wuz ter shoot a white man fur callin' me a tief dey'd hang me, but you wud be called great gempleman for shootin' a man fur callin' you a tief. Now, massa, is dat right?"

"No, Sambo, I'll be hanged if it is, an' I'll take it all back. If I was in Africa no hifalutin chief should impose on me, an' I don't ask nobody to take from me what I wouldn't take from them, nigger or no nigger. But how came you here?"

"Sit down, massa, sit down; you too, young massa, an' let me tell you bofe all about it. It 'a' n't bin ofen anybody's cared to lissen to de story uf a pore nigga.

"When de war broke up an' de niggas wuz sot free, you know, massa, we niggas did n't hav nofin' ter do wid dat; we jess stay on de plantashun an' work like we always done; ole massa wuz plum broke up. He wuz good to his niggas, ole massa wuz, an' so wuz young Mars' Henry, doe we did n't see much ob him, fur he wuz off to collige mose ob de time, but de young han's wuz young an' foolish, an' nofin' wud do 'em but dey must strike out fur darselves; seemed like dey wud n't know dey wuz free till dey wuz off de ole place, an' sum of de ole folks went wid deir

chillun ; dey neber cud go or sta before as dey liked bess. It wuz a foolish ting, but white men does foolish tings sumtimes, let lone pore nigga, who neber had no chance to do fur hissself before. It wuz a bad day fur a heap uf us pore darkies when de ole place wuz broke up. Wish I cud be back dere now like de ole times wuz, but de good Lord knows best ; He don't make no mistakes, an' it 'll all cum rite, doe it's mity hard now.

“Well, young Mars. Henry tout he'd go out Wess an' mak a fortin raisin' cattle an' sheep, so he cud go back an' fix de ole place up agin, an' I went wid him, me an' Diner an' leetle Si, an' we worked hard makin' pens an' puttin' up cabins, an' helpin' Mars' Henry fix up de place what he bot, fur dere were n't a stick ob timber on it when we went dere. De folks out dere — dere were n't 'nough ob 'em ter crowd each oder — did n't 'pear ter like Mars. Henry's comin' 'mongst 'em, an' it war n't long till dey got up a row an' Mars' Henry wuz shot. Dey brung him home, — much like de ole home dat pore cabin wuz, — an' we done de best we cud fur him, me an' Diner, but he did n't las' long. I bleeves yet he'd 'a' got well, ef he cud 'a' got back ter de ole plantashun, but dat were n't to be. I wanted ter leve dere mity bad arter pore Mars' Henry wuz put away in de groun', but dere was a little crop in, an' de only chance wuz to work it out to git sumfin' to lib on. We wuz gittin' 'long right sharp, fur Mars' Henry had sum cows an' chickens, an' we had milk an' buiter an' eggs mose all de time, an' I was hopin' I

wud hav crop 'nough to sell an' take us back ter de ole place dat fall ; but 'bout fodder-pullin' time our trub-bels come on. Mr. Cummins, our closest nabor, wuz a clebber 'nough man hissef, but he had n't paid no 'tention to his chillun, an' his olest son, John, wuz a wild un. One day sum ob de nabors cum ober an' 'cused him o' skinnin' sum ob deir cattle, an' foun' de hides in de lot, an' wuz goin' ter make it hot fur him, but he up an' tole he had bot dem hides frum me. Den dey cum on me 'bout it. I tole 'em I nebber had skinned no cattle in my life, but it war n't no use. He had two frens to swar fur him, an' de pore nigga did n't hab nobody, an' dey tuk me off to jail. Pore Diner cum ter see me ebery week, doe she had ter walk all de long way an' tote leetle Si, an' always brung me sumfin' to ete frum de ranch, an' sed she wud do her best to git de crop in, an' when I wuz turned loose we wud git away frum dere back to de ole place agin. Tinkin' 'bout dat made de long days a heep shorter dan dey wud 'a' bin widout it.

“Well, when de trial cum on, young John Cummins had de bes' lawyer dere wuz dere, an' dey fotched up his frens, an' dey swore dey seed me skinnin' dem berry hides, an' dat I tole 'em I had paid de owners fur ter be 'lowed ter skin 'em. An' d n't hab no frens an' no money, an' wus n't nofin' but pore nigga nohow, an' de jury saunt me ter der pententry fur sebben long yeers. It wuz mity hard, but I did n't mind it ez much fur myself ez fur poor Diner. What wuz ter becum of her and pore leetle Si while I wuz

shut up outside de sunlight, an' no chance ter do nofin' fur 'em? It seemed like it wud mose break her heart, pore thing. Ah, massa, dere 's bin a heap o' suffrin' ob poor niggas somebody 'll hav to ans'er fur at de las' great day!

"Diner wanted ter go to de pententry wid me an' work outside, but how could she go widout no money an' no way to trabel? It wuz a mity dark hour, massa, when dey tuk me away frum her and Si, and dey cryin' like deir hearts wud break. 'Peared to me like de Lord had done washed His han's ob de whole bizniss, and jess leff dem folks ter hav dere own way, an' settle wid Him at de jedgment.

"Well, dem sebben yeers wus n't ez long ez dey wud ha' bin ef it had n't bin for tinkin' ob de time when I wud git out and git back to Diner and Si. Si wud be big 'nough den to help me right sharp 'bout hoein' an' weedin'. It wuz mity hard, but I jess tried to keep up my trust in de Lord, an' wait, an' at las' my time wuz out, an' de doors wuz opened, an' I wuz a free man agin. Dey gib me sum close an' a little money when dey let me go, an' I jess struck rite out fur de ranch, trabelin' mose day an' nite; but when I got dere dere wus n't no ranch dere, an' when I axed 'bout Diner, dey said she done died ob numonia, dat fust yeer what I wuz in de pententry, but de woman she sed she bleeve Diner done broke her heart grebin' 'bout me, an' I knows she wuz rite. An' leetle Si wuz gone too. I jess knelt down an' prayed de good Lord ter take me too, so ez we'd all be togedder agin,

but dat could n't be. De Lord knowed how bad I wanted ter go, but He war n't reddy fur me den, an' He knows best, doe it's mity hard fur us ter tink so sumtimes. Dat war n't no place fur me den. Eberybody wud be frowin' it up ter me all de time dat I'd been in de pententry, an' I did n't care 'bout tryin' ter make no more dan jess 'nough ter lib on, an' I cum out here ter dis swamp, an' I'se bin libin' here eber sence, an' plese de good Lord, when He's reddy fur me, I hopes to lay my ole bones here."

The old negro raised his ragged sleeve to his eyes, and brushed them. Capt. Dick was sitting with his feet crossed under him, and he tucked down his head for a minute and did n't say anything. Then he raised it up, and his voice was low and soft like that time when he found me under the live-oak, — the time I got left on the prairie in a norther: —

"Well, uncle, don't you think there's a better way than living out here in this thicket by yourself? Suppose somebody was to offer you a home where you would be taken care of, and have plenty to eat, and a bed to sleep in, and not much work to do, and could go to church among people of your own color; would n't that be better than your brush arbor in this thicket?"

"Yes, massa, dat it would. I gits mity hongry sumtimes fur de sound of de gospel and de good ole tunes we used ter sing on de plantashun. I'd make a good han', massa, de best I knows how, fur any man dat would do right fur me. I spected ter die out

here, but I'd be glad ter go back 'mongst people agin."

"Well, what 's your name, uncle?"

"Steve, massa."

"Well, Steve, I'm going to start off with cattle in a few days, and if you'll go with me I'll take you to a man in Gonzales County that will give you a good home, and do a good part by you. I'm sorry I accused you of stealing. You've had trouble enough without my making any more."

"Nebber mind 'bout dat, massa, I jess tout frum yer face you wus n't no bad man, ef you did make out like you wuz going ter shoot me. If you finds me a home, massa, I'll tank you to de las' day ob my life."

"All right, Steve, I'll do that. And I reckon it's about twelve, now; let's cut into this bear and deer, and go to the lake yonder, and have some dinner. Then we'll come back and skin them, and strike out for the ranch."

"Dat bear ain't fitten ter ete nohow. Dey is allez pore ez de shin bone of pore beef in de winter. I dunno how cum dat fool ter cum outen he's hole dis time ob de year. Dey mosely sleeps all winter, but I reck'ns dis warm spell waked him up, an' bein' hongry, an' hearin' ob de row so close to he's hole, he cum out ter see what wuz de matter. Dat wuz a settler I gub him; broke he skull, it did. Dat buck am in berry good condition, an' sum roast rib'll ete frustrate."

Steve skinned out a venison ham and some ribs, and Capt. Dick took some of the bear ribs to try them, and we went to the lake and got dinner. While we were eating, Capt. Dick asked Steve how he lived in the swamp.

"Well, massa, heeps ob times de libin' hab bin berry hard, doe mosely I does farly well. I makes traps, an' sets snares fur rabbits, an' ketches lots ob um, an' sumtimes a coon; an' I finds possums up haw trees and fatches um out wid sticks, an kasnly I kotches a turkey in trap. Dere's lots ob wile hogs an' cattle in dis ticket, an' I watches whar dey has deir runs, an' hides 'hind trees an' draps de axe on de fust one 'fore he knows what's comin'; an' sumtimes I climes a tree what hez branches leanin' down lo ober de cattle path, an' knocks a beef in de head. Den I kotches fish, too, mose any time, doe fish ain't berry good eatin' ter my noshun."

"But, Steve, how do you keep the meat when you kill it?"

"I makes fire, an' cuts hit up inter leetle strips, an' hangs hit in de smoke an' kuores it dat way."

"Well, but, Steve," I said, "I was in your shanty this morning, and I saw some meal and salt and tobacco; where do you get them?"

"Kashunly, massa, I goes out ter Dan's cabin, — he's a colored man dat lives on de Garascitas ranch 'bout seben miles east ob de ober end ob dis swamp, — an' trades him venson an' skins fur meal an' bacca an' salt; but I 'a'n't nebber tole him whar I

libs. I 'a'n't bin in dat arber dese two munts ; bin libin' in toder end ob de swamp, an' jess cum ober here dis mornin'."

"Steve," Capt. Dick said, "you claim to be an honest man, and I believe you are ; at least I don't doubt you think you are. Do you think it's right for you to kill other people's cattle and hogs ?"

"I ha'n't dun it, sir ; nebber kilt nary hog yit dat had eber had his yeer cut, nor nary beef dat had eber had de brandin' iron stuck ter him enywhere. Dese hogs an' cattle what 'a'n't nebber bin marked nor branded don't 'long ter nobody, does dey, massa ?"

"No, Steve ; that is, nobody could tell who they did belong to, and if they did, I reckon the owner would have a nice time gettin' them out of this swamp."

As soon as Steve finished his dinner — he was very glad to get some coffee, and said he had n't had any for two months, only once or twice when it was very cold — he went back to the game to skin it. Capt. Dick said he wanted a smoke before he went to work on them, and I took my rifle and walked to a tree close by the lake, and began watching for the alligator. I couldn't see him anywhere. I happened to think about the game, and went there and got some of the entrails and threw in the lake, and stood ready with my gun. Directly I caught sight of his head under the water, sneaking up to it, and when he stuck his head out and grabbed it, I fired. He

flounced around, and turned over and slapped the water with his tail, knocking it into foam, and then turned over on his back and lay still. He was n't a big one, only about seven feet long. I went back to camp, and asked Capt. Dick what he was shooting at in the morning.

"A drove of *javalinas* (Mexican hogs). I was moving along still through the brush, and came upon a drove of 'em picking up pecans. The little cusses did n't more'n catch sight of me before here they come, and you bet I had to tree, and that quick, too. By good luck, there was a tree close by that forked low, and I pitched my gun into the branches, and lit up into it like there was a herd of bulls at my heels. The little fellows gathered round, and you ought to have heard their teeth poppin'. I have heard of their trying to cut down trees when they got a feller treed, but they did n't try any of that on me. I did n't shoot, because I had heard that if you killed one it would only make the others worse, and I hoped they would get tired directly, and leave; but after waiting on 'em about an hour I got tired, and turned loose, and downed a couple of 'em, and the rest moved from there fast, and that was the last of them. I would like to have had the hide of one of them to have put on my saddle in front, but it was too much trouble to skin, and I just left 'em where they fell; and think'n' it must be about twelve, I struck out for the lake along a cattle trail, and got in just in time to see the killin' over there, and thought I would

give that darky a good scare. I thought, at first, he was some outlaw that had broke jail, and took to the brush; but I believe he's an honest darky, and I'm going to give him a chance to beat this way of lying out in the swamp. How did you happen in here at the same time?"

I told him how I had watched it all from the first.

"It's curious, ain't it, Charley? That deer did n't have the least idea of the panther lightin' on to him, and I reckon the bear don't know yet what hit him, and Steve had n't the least notion of my having a gun-barrel makin' a bee line toward his heart, and I never once thought of your laying out there, when, if you had been an Injin in the Injin country, you could have went for my scalp without my knowin' it. I often think nobody knows how many holes we just miss in running the bulls in the night, and how many snakes might stick it to us, but don't. I have no doubt sometimes, when we think we are in most danger, there really ain't any to speak of; and again, when we have n't the least notion of it, we are riding on the very edge of our graves. There's a heap of strange things in the world, Charley. I think, sometimes, if a feller was always ready for the next one, it would n't make much difference when his time come, though I reckon, if we all had our say about it, we'd want to stay till there weren't a tooth in our heads, and we was n't able to move out of the chimney-corner. I'm 'fraid Steve'll cut them

hides, Charley; let's go and see how he's comin' on."

We took the skins and struck out for our horses, and got back to the ranch by sundown, with the rest of the venison and some of the best of the bear meat, Steve following us in on foot.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRAIL AGAIN. A BAD STAMPEDE. TAK-
ING WATER IN THE DARK. GEN. FOOTE LOSES
HIS HORSE BY DROWNING.

IT was the 12th of March that the gate of the pasture was thrown open, and three thousand head of beeves turned out to take the rail. About two thirds of them had been wintered in the pasture, and the rest had come from the best mesquite range, so that all were in good order. No danger of leaving any of them on the first bed-grounds. It's a pretty sight to me, seeing the long line come pouring out of the gate in a hurry to get out, and without the least idea of the long trip ahead of them. If they knew, I don't think they would be so anxious, particularly those that are shipped, crowded, and jumbled up in the cars, as they are, and sometimes twenty-four or thirty-six hours without water or food. It's pretty much the same way, too, with the green hands. They think it's very nice to be starting off to Kansas, for almost every cow-boy likes to say that he has been to Kansas, and talk about what happened on the trip, and the big stampedes he has been

through; but if they knew just what was before them, how terribly tired and worn out they would often get, and how badly they would want to sleep and could n't, I don't believe some of them would be so anxious to go.

We have twelve hands besides the cook this trip, but none of them are the same we had last time, except Capt. Dick and Nasho and me and Gen. Foote. Old José is our cook again. He's a good cook, only he will put too much *chile* (Mexican pepper) in his meat; but he always manages to have meals ready for us, and will cook anything we bring him, and keep coffee hot for any one that gets in late.

Whistling Bill was there to see us off, and threw an old shoe after us for luck that hit Gen. Foote in the back, and made him double up as if he had been shot. I wish he was going with us; he is so lively, and full of fun, and a real good hand too. He told Capt. Dick he expected to hear of the grasshoppers eating up most of his hands before he got to the Brazos, they were so green; and he said he did n't believe we could get up a first-class stampede without him. He said he believed he would come along just to give us a send-off in that line the first night. Capt. Dick told him if he caught him laying round his camp he'd set a wolf trap, and put him in for bait, but Whistling Bill said there was n't a coyote in Western Texas that would eat him, — there was too much tobacco and pepper in him.

When we struck the Trail, and the cattle began to string out along it, Capt. Dick rode up to me, and said, laying his hand on my shoulder, "Well, Charley, old fellow, here we are again. This Trail makes me think of a big black snake that reaches from here to Kansas. We are going to see hard times this time if I know anything about bull-driving. I've got a lot of greenies that won't learn their letters in driving by the time we get there, and you and me, and Nasho and Gen. Foote have got to do a big share of their work as well as our own, besides watching them to keep them from stampeding their own bulls. Col. Hunt puts off his fag ends on me that no other boss would n't have, because I don't like to stand back or grumble. You bet I'm glad I've got you and Nasho again. Look at that dern'd greeny yonder;" and away he went on a gallop to the tail end of the herd, to stop a new hand from running his horse so much.

Capt. Dick happened to meet the man he wanted to leave Steve with in Gonzales. He said he'd take him, and glad to get him, for he needed help in his crop bad, and if Steve made him a good hand, he could find a home with him as long as he wanted. Capt. Dick had given him some good clothes and blankets, and a pair of shoes, and when he took his things out of the wagon, to put them in the wagon of the man he was going to live with, we gave him five dollars, and Capt. Dick told him if he did n't find a good home where he was going to come back

to the ranch, and he would have something for him to do.

"Good by, young massas," he said, when we told him good by, "dis old darky 'll nebber forgit ye, fur bein' so good to him, an' may de good Lord tak care ob ye, an' fotch ye back all safe an' sound."

I felt sorry for him, going to a place where he did n't know anybody, and not having hardly anything, and getting old; but I think he will find friends 'most anywhere, he's always so willing to help, and it will be a great deal better than sleeping out in the Bresada.

That night we camped in the prairie just the other side of Gonzales. It was clear enough when I lay down, but about twelve o'clock Capt. Dick called me, and said me and Nasho had better bridle our horses, and have them where we could crawl them in a minute.

"Don't sit up, boys," he said as he rode off, "but be ready, for I'm afraid the bulls won't stand a storm, and it looks like it was coming."

We threw our beds into the wagon, bridled our horses, and lay down on a blanket with our reins in our hands. It did n't seem to me I had more than got to sleep before I heard the old noise that had made me jump so often before. In a second I was in the saddle, and Comanche was going like a streak. He did n't need any guiding. He knew what to do, just as well as I did. They had got a fair start, but we was n't long in making the head of

the herd. I noticed, as I passed them, that they were all bunched, and very few scattering, but I thought that would make them the easier to manage. When I got in front of them, I found Capt. Dick and one other hand doing their best to fight them back and turn them. We did our best, riding right in front of them, and holloing and yelling, but it was no use. They kept right on. It was n't very dark. We could see well enough, but the light did n't seem to help us any. They had run about three miles, when Capt. Dick dashed up to me, and said, as we rode together in front of them:—

“Charley, it'll never do to let 'em get into town. We must stop 'em! Get Nasho, and come to me, and we'll make a dash all together, and see if we can't turn 'em.”

I found Nasho, and then we went to Capt. Dick. We had to ride lively to get around the cattle on the other side. We all made a dash, holloing and yelling like Indians, but it was no use. There was no stop in 'em. I got ahead of 'em, and dashed up to 'em like I was going to run right over 'em, but they just whirled to either side, and I found myself in the herd. I was n't long getting out of there, I tell you. Just as I came out Capt. Dick came up again.

“There's no stopping the dern'd bulls, Charley; but hold 'em together the best you can, and try and keep 'em from running into a fence.”

We got down into the edge of the town, and they were sticking together, and keeping the road pretty

well, but all of a sudden a dog ran out and began barking, and away they went, five times worse than ever. Crash, crash, crash, — right through a fence. I kept with 'em, but dropped back to let 'em break the fence on the other side. They was n't long doing it, and I rode to the front again. I was watching the cattle behind me, when I felt Comanche rising under me. It seemed to me he jumped twenty feet. The ditch never stopped them, and in two minutes we was on the river bank. In they went. I could hear them splashing the water, as they dashed in, and blowing and clashing their horns together. I did n't like it a bit, but Comanche never faltered, and in we went. Ugh! was n't it cold? I kept him well down stream, to be out of the way of the cattle, and gave him the bridle. It seemed like a long time before we struck bottom and climbed out. The swim cooled 'em a good deal, but as they came blowing and puffing up the bank, they struck out through the bottom in a trot. I knew it was no use to try and round up in the bottom, so I just kept at their head, and let 'em go, holloing to 'em, to try and quiet 'em down. When we got fairly out into the prairie on the other side, I began riding round to round 'em up. I could check them now without much trouble, and directly I met somebody else doing the same thing. It was Nasho. We got them checked up, and quiet. Another hand came up, and we left him in front of them, and rode round, one each side, to gather in the stragglers. I felt pretty safe, because we were in a

pasture, and they could n't straggle off far. At sun-up we let them begin to feed. About an hour afterwards we saw Capt. Dick coming.

"Well, Charley," he said, as he came up, looking as if he was 'most tired out, "this is the worst run ever I saw, and I've been in several that were n't any slouches. We smashed somebody's patch all to flinders, and that'll be to pay for. Long Jim went into a gulch, and his horse won't come out any more, — broke his neck square in two; and Sleepy Dick's got his hind leg broke. That ain't much loss, but I'm sorry for the dern'd fellow. He was doing his best, I reckon, and no wonder he did n't see the stump, for he can hardly see a tree in daytime. I'll bet this'll let him out of going to Kansas any more. Have you seen the General?"

"Not since we all made that dash together on top of the hill."

"I don't know what 's become of him. I'm afraid he's hurt. I'm glad all over you and Nasho did n't get smashed. I was on top of the hill when you took water, and waited two or three minutes till I saw Spot crawling out on the other side, and I knew the bulls would be safe enough with you two, so I turned tail, for I was afraid the cussed greenies would n't know what to do if they was left by themselves. I see young Carter yonder. He took water too, did he?"

"He must have been somewheres about the front, because when me and Nasho commenced rounding

up, after we got out in the prairie, he came up directly."

"I think he's good grit. I'll have to leave you three with these bulls, and cross the river, and straighten up things on the other side. You've managed just right, Charley. Just let 'em feed to-day, and ride through the bottom and pick up the stragglers, and this evening I'll come over with help, and we'll put 'em over."

"Do you think we are out many, Capt. Dick?"

"Not many, I reckon. You've got the bulk of 'em here, and there are two or three hundred just across the river. By the time we glean the bottom and the mesquites, I reckon we'll about have our number. There's half-a-dozen in one pile in the gulch where Long Jim's horse lies, and I expect there's a good many stove up and lamed by that fence-breaking, but we have n't lost much on the cattle. I wish to the Lord I knew what had become of Gen. Foote. I'll stop at Judge De Witt's, and get 'em to cook something for you, and when you hear the horn blow one of you go in and get it, and get your dinner there too. Keep your eyes skinned for stragglers, boys."

Every now and then a few stragglers would come out of the bottom, and we'd gather them in. We was beginning to think the horn was a long time blowing, when we saw Gen. Foote coming on a strange horse, with a bucket on his arm. He had our breakfast, and while we were eating, he told us

that he had lost his horse in the river. He was about half-way over when he went under with him, and he left him and struck out for bank, thinking he could make his way out with no weight on him, but he did n't come out.

"I 'an't nebber sot eyes on him sence; saddle an' all's gone. Dat run las' nite beats all eber I seed. Dar wuz no more stoppin' dem bulls dan a steme-injin. Lord, how dey did run! Dat horse ob mine wuz mose broke down fore we got to de ribber. Ef I had n' bin a fool I nebber would 'a' tuk water wid 'im, but I knowed dem greenhorns wud n't cum no fudder dan de todder bank, an' de bulk of de bulls wuz gwine cross, an' dere orter be sumbody on dis side ter round em up. You orter seen me gittin' up dat bank when I cumd out. Got behin' a tree till de mose of 'em done pass, an' den I got los', an' dat black bottom 'peared to me like it was a hunerd miles trew. Jess az I cumd up to Judge Douit's, I met de boss, an' he tole me to wait an' git yer brekfus an' fotch to yer, an' he hired dis hoss an saddle fur me ter-day. I ain't gwine ter hurt 'im, but you bet he's gwine to yearn his doller dis day. I would n't mind dat little scraw-bones pony bein' in de bottom ob de ribber, ef I jess had my saddle an' tings off 'im."

Capt. Dick came back in the evening, and we got the herd over again and out to camp. We did n't lose more than a dozen, all told. Capt. Dick left Sleepy Dick at a house where he would be taken

care of, and hired another hand in his place. Billy McGlossy was his name, and he made a good hand, too, worth two of Sleepy Dick. We had to wait there another day to get the fence matter settled, and then we struck out northward.

CHAPTER V.

LYNCH LAW. STOPPING A HANGING. HOW WE CAME
BY CRACKLINS.

I THOUGHT this time I would have a good look about Austin when we got there, but it was just like the time before. A sailor told me once that when he first shipped to sea he did it because he thought he was going to see so much of the world, but when he got to a place, most of the time he had to begin looking for another ship, or was busy loading, or something else happened that he had to go away without seeing hardly anything of it. It's pretty much that way with bull-driving. You have to stick so close to the bulls that you don't have time to go anywhere, or see anything.

Some very pretty houses had been put up since last year. I went into the Capitol and took another look at the pictures, and the library, and things in the geologist's room — I reckon there are ten thousand different kinds of rocks in that room, just little lumps of them, but I had to leave before I was half done. The gentleman who was in charge, Col. King, was very kind to me, and showed me a good many

things that I would n't have noticed but for him, and told me a heap about the books. He had six or seven great big books full of colored pictures that showed how the people that used to live in Mexico used to tell what they wanted to say, for they did n't know how to write or print, as we do now. I think he said they were Aztecs, and their pictures were called hieroglyphics. I wish I could live in Austin a while, and go to the Capitol, and read some of the books there.

Way up on the Brazos we had another stampede, but it was n't a very bad one, and we didn't lose any cattle. It's a heap colder this year, and we have a great deal more rain than we did last. The camp fire is right pleasant when we come in off guard to breakfast, and I tell you the hot coffee goes well. I had rather do without breakfast than it. There don't seem to be as many cattle on the Trail this year as there were last, or else we are ahead of them, for we don't hear of them on the road. Cattle are getting scarce in Texas. They have been hunting the brush for the wild ones, and now they are buying up and driving off the gentle ones. If they are eaten up this way, it looks to me like people will have to go without beef before many years, unless they turn in to raising them again. Cattle are worth more than they used to be, but horses are not worth so much. You can buy plenty of Spanish stock, as they run, for about six to eight dollars a head. They are not good for anything but to drive stock, and there ain't much stock to run now. I reckon if the French had them

they would make beef of them. I read last winter that there was a regular horse market in Paris, the capital of France, where they sold horse-meat, just like beef, every day. I don't want any in mine. I think it would be tough and stringy, like an old fox-squirrel, only dryer.

One evening, the day before we crossed the Trinity, Capt. Dick and me had been to a little town on the road, I don't remember the name now, to buy some provisions and hobble rope. As we were coming back to camp, we saw four men off to one side, and a negro with a rope round his neck. One of the men was climbing the tree under which they were standing. We could tell, from their actions, that they were going to hang the negro, and he was begging and praying them not to do it. We rode up to them, and Capt. Dick asked what was up.

"Jest a-goin' to cure this black horse-thief of ridin' other people's horses," said one of them, a tall gangling man with red hair, a broad-brimmed straw hat, and a mouth full of tobacco, who seemed to be the leader.

"Lord-a-massy, massa, don't let 'em hang me. I nebber stole de horse. 'Fore de Lord, massa, I did n't. Jess traded for him dis day; gib my black pony what I bought from Tom Jenkins, and got ten dollars to boot. Hit's in my pocket now; jess feel dar an' see ef hit ain't."

"Make haste up thar, Mose, an' fix that rope, an' we'll soon cure the black cuss of lyin'. All right

now, cum down an' we'll jess swing him. Grab holt, boys, an' no spittin' on hands after you onst takes holt. Down with you, Mose. What keeps you so long gettin' down a tree as easy as a step-ladder?"

Mose, as they called the short, thick-set, hard-faced looking man up the tree, began to come down, and the others grabbed the rope, and setting themselves back, got ready to pull on it and hoist the poor negro, when Capt. Dick spurred Beelzebub up a little closer, and said, quick and short:—

"Hold on, men, hold on; maybe there's something wrong about this thing. I'm no hand for pokin my head in other folks' business, but I can't see a man hung who swears he's innocent, without giving him a chance to prove it. How do you know he stole the horse?"

"Know it? Were n't the horse missin' outen my stable two nights ago, an' did n't we foller 'im up an' catch this black rascal on him jest as cool as ef he'd raised 'im? Ain't that proof enough? Grab holt, boys!"

"Oh, Lord, massa, don't let em hang me. I's innocent, massa, 'fore de Lord I is. I nebber stole de horse, I's tellin you de trute, massa, don't let em hang me!"

They grabbed hold and gave a quick, steady pull, that raised the poor negro almost clear of the ground, but before they could make another pull Capt. Dick cried in a short, sharp voice,—

"Stop!"

They looked around as if they did not know what to make of it, but I reckon there was something in his face that made them stop.

"Now, men, as I told you first, I don't want to interfere in anybody else's business, but I'm not going to see this nigger hung without knowing something more about the what for. I don't make any threat, but there will be trouble if you pull on that rope before I give the word."

I could tell they did n't like that, but they could see his six-shooter was handy, and he was talking like a man that meant what he said.

"Lord God, stranger, what do you want of any more proof? Ain't that my horse?" pointing to a poor, raw-boned black, that stood by under the tree, with an old saddle and bridle on, almost in pieces. "Was n't he in my stable night afore last, an' did n't we ketch this black raskil on 'im jess now, an' ain't thar three good men as thar ar in Denton County ready to swar to it? An' what business is it of yours anyhow? Maybe the nigger's sum kin to you. You ain't overly white yourself."

It was done so quick you could hardly see it. Capt. Dick snatched out his pistol, spurred Beelzebub with one jump to the fellow's side, and brought him a lick over the head that laid him out as straight as a rail. The men began to feel for their arms, except one who stooped down over the wounded man.

"Come, men, none of that. You are four to one,

and I can't afford to give you the drop. I don't want to hurt one of you. Is there a man of you that would n't have served that foul-mouthed brute as I did? If you are friends of his, you ought to be glad I did n't give him the mouth instead of the barrel of this pistol."

"I reckon you 're nearly right, Cap'n," said the one who had been stooping over him. "I rether think ef it had 'a' bin me I'd 'a' give him the bullet, for to hev it insinerated that you hev black blood in your veins is a leetle more than a white man is called on to put up with. Leastwise, them 's my notions, an' I wur raised in old Massip', wher ther ain't no lack of men what wur usedn to niggers. But, Cap'n, not meanin' no disrespec', what business is it of yourn ef we had 'a' hung the black rascal?"

"In a minute, my good fellow. Just give that man a drink of this, and pour some water on his head."

He handed him his pocket whiskey flask, and the canteen from his saddle.

"Don't trouble yourself 'bout him, Cap'n. He'll cum up all right. You might 'a' dropped a crow-bar on his head 'ithout crackin' it. I'll bring him through all right."

As he began to follow Capt. Dick's instructions, Capt. Dick went on:—

"I'm not going to see this nigger hung, any more than I would see you hung without knowing something about what you was to be hung for. I've seen

a good deal of this jerking up Mexicans and niggers, and swinging 'em off just because stock had been lost, and they could n't defend themselves. The negro says he traded for the horse, and I'm going to give him a chance to prove it. It's what you or any other man would want in his place; and it's only what a dog ought to have before he's put out. Ain't that fair, men?"

"Yes, Cap'n, that's fair. No discount on that."

"Well, men, what proof have you that this negro stole this horse?"

The fellow who had been speaking began to scratch his bushy head, holding his hat down by his side.

"Well, Cap'n, we catch'd him on a horse that 'longs to Jim Gazlee here, sure's shootin', for there's the creetur, an' here's the nigger, an' I reck'n that's pretty good law on that pint of the crim'n'l bizness, lessn he's got a bill of sale, an' I reck'n he ha'n't. Hev you, darky?"

The negro looked puzzled, and did n't say anything.

"Come, blacky, let it out; it'll end your troubles ef you hez. Hev you got a bill of sale uf this horse what we catch'd you on?"

"I dunno what no bill of sale am, but I knows I traded fur dat hoss far, — giv my black pony, what I bot from Tom Jenkins, fur him. Ef he's stole I nebber dun it, shuah."

"Now, Cap'n, you've heerd him. We finds 'im

on the hoss, an' he ha'n't nothin' to show how he cum by him. I reck'n now it's his time to show how he got him, ef he don't want to be tuk up for stealin'."

"You are right, there. It's his time now. Come, my good fellow, when did you trade for this horse?"

"Jes about dinner-time, massa. I wuz ridin' along down the road, an' a man met me, ridin' dis yere hoss, an' he seed mine wur mose broke down, an' he offered fur to trade me hisn. He said he lived 'bout here, an' cud put him in de pasture, an' he wud hab time to res' an git fat; dere weren't nuthin' de matter wid him, only he wuz tired an' broke down, an' I tout it wur all rite, an' tuk him up. We jess got down an' changed saddles an' riggin', an' I cum dis way an' he went tudder, an' dat's all I know 'bout it. I nebber tout 'bout mebbe he's habn stole de hoss."

"You say it was about dinner-time you traded?"

"Yes, sir; jess 'bout."

"And the man you traded with went up the Trail?"

"Yes, sir."

"How came you to be coming down the Trail this time of year?"

"Why, you see, massa, I wur dribin' cattle fur Kurnel Fant, ob Golyad County, an' one of my hosses got snake-bit, an' I had to leab him, an' de tudder one — dat black what I traded — broke down, an' de boss did n't like me much nohow, and 'scharged me, an' I wuz goin' back to Golyad fur to git wid anudder herd of de Kurnel's."

"Well, men, that 's a straight enough story. What do you say?"

"Most anybody kin make up a straight tale, Cap'n, but whar 's the prufe? I reck'n the word of the man what 's tuk up wud n't be much evidence fur to cl'ar him in no court in this State. I hain't no lawyer, but that 's my notion of the law on that p'int."

"True or not, as you say, that ain't good evidence. What do you propose to do about it?"

"So fur az I am consarn'd, I 'm willin' to take the nigger to the sheriff, an' turn him over, an' let him take the chances fur the penitentiary."

"Do you believe he stole the horse?"

"How do I know, Cap'n? We ketch'd him with the horse, an' he hain't giv' no prufe that he did n't steal him. No nigger's word don't go fur with me."

"You are willing to give him a fair chance?"

"Sartinly, Cap'n, an' I reck'n he 'll git that fore the court, though hiz culor ar' rether on the discount in this keounty, an' cattle-men ain't no spec'l favorites nohow, an' fur good re's'n, fur they 've cleaned the range. Dern'd ef we kin keep a milk cow fur the dern'd thieves."

"If you want to do the fair thing, here's the chance. That fellow belonged to some herd that ain't far ahead. We can catch him before night. He's got rid of his stolen horse, and he won't be in any hurry. Now come with us, and we 'll overhaul

him, and seew hether the darky has told the truth or not."

"Why, Cap'n, we ha'n't no call to foller a feller that we don't know nothin' 'bout. We've got the horse, an' that's all we want. How're we to know the nigger ha'n't lied, an' when to quit ridin'; an' spose he's left the Trail, how're we to know it? I reck'n that ud be a reg'lar wile-goose chase."

"Well, I've offered to furnish the proof that he didn't steal the horse. If you won't go with me, you must let the negro go."

"Let him make his prufe 'fore the court. We'll take him to the sherff, an' turn him over all right."

"Very well, I will go with you."

"I know 't ain't my bizness, Cap'n, but I'm powerful curus to know what you want to go fur."

"I found you about to hang this negro without any proof that he had stolen the horse. If he had, and you could have proved it, you would n't have had any more right to have hung him than me. You've talked about the law; now I'm going to give you a little law. When you turn the negro over to the sheriff, I'm going to turn you over on a charge of attempt to commit murder, and I've got a good witness here, and I'll make it my business to be here when court comes on, and I think I can promise to make it hot for you."

"I reckon we'll have our say so 'bout bein' turn'd over."

The fellow started to put his hand to his pistol,

but before he could do it Capt. Dick had covered him with his six-shooter, and said to him, just as quiet and easy as he had been talking, only quick and sharp :—

“Throw up your hands ! No fooling, or I’ll blow daylight through you !”

He saw it would n’t do to take any risks, for Capt. Dick looked like he would rather shoot him than not, and he up with his hands quick.

“Now, Charley, just get down and unbuckle that fellow’s pistol.”

Just as I got down, and started to him, the fellow that Capt. Dick had knocked down, and who had come to after drinking the whiskey, and had been sitting up, called out :—

“Don’t giv’ up yer pist’l, Jeff. —— ’em, we kin whip ’em in no time. The little one ain’t nobody in a fight.” And he began to feel for his own pistol.

I snatched my little revolver out of my pocket, where I always carried it, and pointed it at his head, and told him to hold up his hands.

“Sartinly, youngster, sartinly, but jess turn that dern’d thing away, will you ? I’m feard of wepons in boys’ hans.”

“That’s right, Charley. Take this other fellow’s pistol. And be careful, men ; the first motion I see to hurt the boy, or catch a pistol, by the Eternal I’ll let drive at the man that makes it.”

I half expected the fellow would give me a lick that would turn me a somerset, and take the

chances of dodging Capt. Dick; but I unbuckled his belt, and then buckled it again, and hung it over Capt. Dick's saddle. Then I took the pistol from the other man, and buckled that round my waist. The other two men were n't armed, and just stood and looked on.

"Now, men, we are ready to move. Step out there, two and two."

"Hold on, Cap'n, you're a smart one, an' you've got us. I reck'n we'd better comp this thing. So fur ez I am consarned, the nigger kin take the hoss an' go his road, an' we'll go ourn, an' no questions asked of nobody."

"Esy nuff fur you, Jeff, you white-livered cuss, but I ha'n't no notion uf givin' up my hoss in no such way. Let him make his charge, an' be hanged to him."

"Easy, my man. If I do make it, into the penitentiary you all go. I'll clear the darky first, and then we'll have three good witnesses, and you have n't got the sign of a show of one. But I'm willing to comp this thing. I believe the horse is yours, and I don't want anything but what is right. You take the horse, and I'll take the darky with me, and there'll be nothing said. You deserve to go to the penitentiary for trying to hang an innocent man, but I can't well leave my bulls, and I'll let you off this time."

"Fair enough, Cap'n," said Jeff; "you're straight as a shingle. Ef that don't suit Bill, he kin hoe his

own row fur all me, an' a poor out he'll make, too, I reckon. But how 'bout the shootin' irons?"

"If you all swear not to make any attempt to hurt any of us, I'll give you back your pistols."

"Right enuff, Cap'n, you're on the square."

"Then hold up your right hands."

They all held up their right hands, though the one they called Bill was mighty slow about his, as if he did n't much want to do it.

"One at a time, men, and speak clear. Remember you are on your oaths, just as much as you would be in the court-room."

"You do, each and all of you, solemnly swear that you will make no effort whatever to hurt in any way me, or Charley, or this negro, now or at any other time, so help you God?"

Each one answered yes, and he told me to hand them their pistols.

When they had put them on, Bill got his in his hand, and said, —

"I reckon we're 'bout ekul now, an' the law don't count a oath what's got outen a man when he kan't help hisself."

"All right. You reckon I would have given your pistols back, if I had n't known me and Charley could hold our own with you anywhere? If you want a fight, just open the ball. But be careful, for we ain't going to wait for any word. The first move, we fire."

"Put up your wepon, Bill Lepstun, you ole fool.

The Cap'n's acted on the square, an' I'm goin' to stand to my word, an' ef that don't suit you, you don't git no help from me."

"I did n't mean noth'n. I wur only jokin'," said Bill, as he fumbled his pistol back into its holster.

"Pistols are a bad thing to joke with; the joker gets hurt sometimes, when a man don't understand the joke, and is a little too quick on trigger. As to your oaths, that 's between you and your consciences, men. Come, Charley, let's ride. And you, — what's your name?"

"Cracklins, massa."

"Well, Cracklins, you had better come with us to-night."

"Tank you, massa, tank you; I hope you'll keep me all de time, massa."

Without paying any attention to the men, we turned our backs on them and rode off. Cracklins kept up with us very well, and when we got to camp, he said, —

"Now, massa, ef you let me, I'm gwine to stick to you; you sabed my life fur sartin. I kaant herd 'ithout hosses, you know, cause de bulls won't stan' dat; but I'll help de cook an tek car ob your hosses, an' do anything I kin."

"All right, Cracklins. We'll fix that up. I have n't got any spare horses, but if you want to go with us for your grub, you can do it; and the first time we need a hand, I'll put you in. Some of 'em will be wanting to take the back track as soon as we

get through, and you can come in then. Catch that roan horse there, put my rigging on him, and go out and bring in the horses."

"All right, massa."

And that's how Cracklins came to be one of our hands. And he made a good one, too. He was always ready for anything that came to hand. He was a first-rate cook, good at catching a horse, could ride anything, and was always in a good humor. Many a good laugh did we have at his queer sayings. One day he left his skillet of bacon to unsaddle Capt. Dick's horse, and when he got back the meat was burnt up.

"Dat's what ud a happ'n'd to Cracklins, Massa Dick, ef you an Mass' Charley had n't a happ'n'd long dat way jess when you did. Hope de debbil got dem men 'fore now an' burnt dey inter cracklins black'r'n dese."

CHAPTER VI.

HOW CRACKLINS GOT HIS NAME. CAMP TALK.

INDIAN TERRITORY, April 20, 1877.

WE are nearly through Indian Territory, and will be glad enough to get out of it, too, for we've had nothing but trouble and hard work since we crossed Red River. The nights have been so cold that we have had to wear overcoats, and been glad to stir up the fire when we came off guard, and the coffee-pot has n't had much rest. It has rained a great deal, and kept us up at night, until we are all worn out with loss of sleep, and our night horses are run down following the cattle over these long prairies. The bad weather, and their restlessness at night, has kept the cattle from doing well, and everybody seems cross and out of humor, except Capt. Dick, Nasho, and Cracklins. Cracklins makes a first-rate hand. He is always ready to stand guard at night for anybody that's sick or worn out, and he keeps the camp in wood and water, and helps old José about his cooking. Cooking in this rainy weather has been a great deal of trouble, but no matter how much it rains we always have our meals, — that is, if

the cattle don't run clear off from camp at night, as they do sometimes. Capt. Dick says no matter what happens, the cooking must go on, and whenever we strike camp the coffee-pot is always handy for anybody that wants a cup. We had a beef killed by lightning one night, and Cracklins skinned him, and dried the hide, and when it rains he stretches it towards the rainy side and makes the fire for cooking under it, so that the rain won't put it out. Wood has been right scarce sometimes, but he will take a horse, or one of the work-mules, when we stop, and go off hunting wood, and generally keeps a supply on hand. He don't like to cook with buffalo chips, — says they ain't clean, and make the victuals taste, but I don't see any difference in the cooking. They make a clear, hot fire, better than the half-rotten cottonwood we have to use sometimes.

One night Capt. Dick asked Cracklins how he got his name.

“Well, massa, you see when I was bornd, dey didn't gib me no name, an' mammy died d'rectly arterwards, an' daddy wer sold off de place, an' dere wa'n't nobody to tek much care ob me, an' I jis growd up 'thout no name tell I wur four or fibe years old. One day, in hog-killin' time, de ole woman what sorter tuk car ob me — it wa'n't much I got frum nobody, I tell you — went off to de cottin patch an' leff a gourd ob cracklins on de shelf whar I could rech 'em. I wer powerful hongry, — 'peared like I had n't had nuthin to eat in a week, an' my belly wer ez empty ez

decoffee-pot arter you 's done wid supper, Massa Dick. I watch'd dat ole woman whar she put dem cracklins, an' ez soon ez she wur outn sight, I went ter ole Pete's cabin an' begged a pone ob dodger, an' den I jiss flew back to dat shelf. I rechd up on tiptoe an' got hole ob dat gourd, — 't was powerful big gourd, like soap gourd, — de ole woman say de niggers in Afriky call 'em kalybashes, — an' I went out under de jimsun weeds an' sot down, an' when I got up frum dar dey warnt nary sign ob no cracklin in dat gourd, an' I wuz ez full ez de pig what gits to de buttermilk trof fore de oder ones cums up. I cud n't hardly rech up an' put dat gourd back. Ef I had n't bin so full I'd knowd better dan to put de gourd back, 'cause ef I had leff it on de floor de ole woman wud 'a' tout ole Bose had dun it, an' he wud 'a' ketchd de warmin' what she gin me dat night. Golly, but she did flung it ter me when she got her han' on me. I made a good run fer it, but I wur too full of de cracklins, an' dat black raskil — long-legged Si — he hope cotch me. Reckon I fixed him fur dat, do. Foun' him sleep under de simmon-bush wid a yaller jackit's nes' in it, an' I jess hit dat nes' one lick an' flew frum dar. So did Si, but he did n't flew fas' nuff to git outn de way ob dem yeller jackits, an' nex' day dat nigger's head looked like warty postoak. De oberseer had ter let him off wurk dat day. Dat nigger did n't lub ter work, but he 'd ruther 'a' worked a week dan hab noder yellow jackit's nes' drap on he when he sleep. Nebber tole him nuffin 'bout how it happen'd. Reckon I 'd ketched yaller jackits too, ef I had.

“Dat ole wom’n, she did n’t mek much offn me, nodder. De oberseer tuk me out huntin’ wid ’im one ebenin’ ter kerry he birds, an’ gin me his powder-horn ter hole while he put de shot in de gun. I slipped out ’bout a load ob powder, an’ wrapped it in sum ob de paper whar he used fur wadd’n, an’ pinn’d it up in my shirt-tail wid thorns. Nex’ Sunday de ole woman had comp’ny hum frum preachin’, an’ dun her bes’, — killed bofe de guineys, an’ put on de bes’ frock an’ de reddes’ hankerchef she hed. Arter dinner, I members mity well I did n’t git none of dem guineys, but one long scrawbones neck; wud n’t dun de ole woman dat way ef she hed toted far wid me ’bout dem guineys, case I hed hope feed ’em an’ hunt dey eggs, when I got my foot full of briers, an’ I ort ter ’a’ hed bofe of de drumsticks. Arter dinner de ole woman filled her bes’ pipe — powerful big pipe dat was what Mass Charley gib her — an’ laid it down ter tend ter sumthin she hed forgot. I slipp’d it way rite easy, an’ emptied de bacca out, an’ put in de powder till it wur mose full, an’ den put bacca on top, an’ put it back jess like I foun’ it. De ole woman wur leenin back ginst de ole reckety table whar de water bucket sot, smokin’ powerful, an’ listenin’ to de lies ob de ole preacher, when de pipe blew up, an’ you jess orter to seed her go heels ober head. Dat upsot de table an’ down cum de bucket ob water rite inter her face, an’ a pitcher ob butter-milk onter her new dress, what missus had jess gib her fur waten on Mass Charley when he wur sick;

plum spilt it; 't would n't wash out nohow. De ole woman wud like ter hab laid dat on me, but I were sleep under de jimsum weeds, when she cum out dar. She 'cluded it wur de fault ob de bacca, an' she nebber wud buy no more frum dat man. I jess tout to myself, Ole woman, ef you knowd how dat powder cum in dat pipe, next time you kill'd a guiney you wouldn't gib dis chile no scrawbone neck. An' dat's how I cum to be called Cracklins, sir. An' I lubs cracklin bred till yit. Golly! wish I hed a pone now, big ez ole Cæsar's foot. When de cattle sees dat nigger's track in de woods, dey all runs togedder, bellerin like dey do when dey smells fresh blood whar beef bin kill'd."

"What do they do that for, Cracklins?"

"'Cause dey know it'll tek a many a one ob deir hides to mek him a par ob shoes. Dey's glad ter see spring cum, so dat darky kin go bar'footed.

"He wur a layin' in de cabin one nite fore de fire wid one foot stuck up ober his knee, facin' de fire, an' studyin' 'bout preachin nex' Sunday, lookin' fur his sarmen in de cracks ob de ruf, — de ole fool. Dreckly he say, 'thout lookin' at de fire, —

"'Dis is a cole night, Sister Dinah.'

"'Don't seem ter me dat it am so bery cold, Bruder Cæsar.'

"He lay dar awhile longer, an' den he say, —

"'Pears to me, Sister Dinah, dat it am gettin' colder. Am dere sficchun s'ply ob wood on de fire fur de disclemency ob de wedder?"

“ ‘Yes, Brudder Cæsar, de chimly am full, but I ’ll stir it up a leetle.’

“Dreckly he fetched a shibber like he were ’bout ter hab a chill, an’ rais’d he hed a leetle, so he cud see de fire. ‘Get out ob de way dar, Cracklins,’ he calls out.

“I wur ’tendin’ to be sleep in de corner, but I did n’t say nuffin.

“ ‘Git out de way ob de fire, you leetle raskil!’ he calls out agin, sorter ez ef he wuz gittin mad like.

“ ‘Cracklins am in bed an’ sleep, Brudder Cæsar; what duz you mean?’

“ ‘You don’t mean ter tell me, Sister Dinah, dat dat imperent little darky hain’t stan’in’ rite ’fore me a keepin’ off de fire?’

“ ‘Deed he am in bed, Brudder Cæsar; jess look fur yousef.’

“De ole fool raised up, and fore de Lord, Massa Dick, he hed bin layin’ dere gittin cole cause dat big foot ob his had bin keepin’ de fire offn ’im, an’-he tout it wur me.”

“Get on that dun horse and go out and see where the horses are, you lying rascal,” said Capt. Dick, laughing harder than he often does.

“Dat ’s God’s truf, Massa Dick, you nebber bin seed no such foot. Massa Charley tuk one of dat nigger’s worn-out shoes, and cut off de upper, an’ rufed de stall für de yearlin’ bay colt wid it. Nebber got wet all dat winter, dat colt did n’t.”

Capt. Dick says Cracklins is worth a good hand

just to keep camp in good-humor. He traded a foot-sore steer for a pair of pants, a second-hand Yankee overcoat and a blanket, and gave them to Cracklins. He was more out than in his clothes when he first came to us. I expect you think this is great foolishness to be writing to you, but it is interesting to us, and a part of our life. We are so far out of the world, that is, it seems that way to us, and our life is so much just one steady thing, that almost anything that is a change is interesting to us. We get up in the morning, change horses, get breakfast, and start northward,—always northward; stop at noon to graze and get our dinners, drive in the evening, camp before sundown, catch horses, get supper, and go on guard when our time comes, and so it is day after day almost without any change. We don't even see much of each other, because the cattle keep us apart during the day, and at noon or night everybody is glad to take out what little spare time he may have in sleep. Now and then we see somebody from another herd, but that is not often, and he is usually in a hurry, too, and only one or two get to see him, and then he don't have any news, except about his herd. And in camp the talk is almost always about cattle, or something that has happened to the talker, and I get tired of that, though I like to hear the boys tell about the stampedes they have been in. We have one hand who has been on the trail nearly ever since the war, and has driven for almost every large stock-driver and almost every-

where. He has been to almost every army post in Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, and the other Western frontier States and Territories, knows all the trails, has seen most of the leading army officers on the frontier, and a good many of the Indian chiefs. He don't stay with any man long. Capt. Dick says he is a first-rate hand, that any of the stockmen would be glad to keep him, and that Chisum offered him one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month regular if he would stay with him, but he's got into a way of changing and roving, and he's never satisfied anywhere long. He has very little to say, but once or twice I have heard him get into a talking way, and talk for several hours, and everybody is always glad to listen to him. He has seen so much that he always has something to tell new to most of us, and he don't "yarn," as many drovers do. I've heard just as interesting stories around camp-fires as I have ever read in books, and somehow it seems to bring it nearer to you when the man who went through it is sitting before you, and then you can ask him questions about things he is talking about. I have often wished, in reading books, that I could ask the men who wrote them a few questions about things they did n't make as plain as I would have liked to have them. There is so much left out in books! I have read a good deal about Indians, I mean for a boy of my age, who has n't had any more time and chances than I have, but it seems to me, since I have seen some myself on the prairies

where they were at home, I know them better than I ever would have done just from reading books about them. It may be partly because Nasho has told me so much about them.

There are not many grown men that know as much about them as Nasho, because he was with them so long, and learned all about their every-day life. I have heard one or two men tell about being at councils held with the Indians, and just from that they thought they knew more about Indians than anybody. I heard a man at Philadelphia talking to some Englishmen about the stock business, and driving cattle, and anybody who did n't know better would have thought he had been in it, and knew all about it. I could tell from his talk that he had never even been on a ranch, or driven bulls a day. I suppose he picked up what he knew hanging round the hotels and stock-yards at Kansas City, and maybe at Ellsworth. I just felt like I wanted to step in and tell them right. I hate to hear a man listening to what ain't so, when he is in earnest about wanting the truth. It 's like directing a traveller on the wrong road. It was n't any of my business, though, and I did n't say anything, but afterward two of the same men came to the yard where me and Nasho were at work, and I got to talking to them, and told them the right of a good many things they had heard wrong from that man.

I don't intend to write to you again until I have something interesting to tell, though if you could

see Cracklin's black, shiny, wrinkled face, looking like he was always ready for a laugh, and hear his queer talk in his comical way, and knew, too, what a good hand he was, and always in a good-humor, I don't believe you could help but be interested in him.

CHAPTER VII.

RUN OVER BY BUFFALOES. A TORN-UP CAMP. NOTHING TO EAT BUT BUFFALO MEAT, AND NO BEDDING. NEARLY THREE HUNDRED HEAD GONE.

KANSAS, NEAR THE LINE, April 30.

I TOLD you last time I would not write again until something happened. If you had been with us you would have thought something was happening. The day after I wrote you we camped on the slope of a long ridge, — not on top, as we generally do. We made a dry camp, and had nothing but buffalo chips to cook with, for Cracklins could not find any wood. Capt. Dick and me were on guard about an hour before day. The cattle were quiet, nearly all of them lying down, and we were sitting on our horses together, catching a few minutes' talk, when we heard something that sounded like deep, low thunder, but a good ways off.

"That's curious," Capt. Dick said, "thunder in a clear sky." We kept still, and listened closely. It was too steady for thunder. It did n't stop at all, and it kept getting nearer and nearer, and louder and louder.

“By George, Charley, it’s a herd of buffaloes on the run; make a streak for camp; tell ’em all it’s buffaloes coming like the devil. Send Nasho and Cracklins to get the horses out of the way. Tell the boys to hurry out with their pistols, and a blanket apiece. Make ’em turn the hind end of the wagon this way before they start, and when you come back, Charley, look out for yourself, and don’t get caught in the herd. They won’t stop for fire nor water.”

I was n’t long getting to camp, but by the time we got back to the cattle the buffaloes were almost on us. It was a tremendous big herd, and in the dim starlight,—for it always grows darker just before day,—we could see them coming down the slope like a big, solid cloud rolling over the ground. Capt. Dick and several of us galloped out to meet them, fired pistols into the herd, shook blankets in their faces, yelled and hollered, and tried every way to turn them, but it was no use. They were so thick and deep, that the foremost ones could n’t have stopped if they had wanted to. We had to turn and run for it, to save ourselves. They were almost on me before I started, but instead of keeping straight before them I took a slanting course, so as to get beyond their line out of the way. It did n’t take Comanche long to clear their front. He just fairly flew. He was n’t afraid of them though, because I had run him right up to the herd a dozen times when we were trying to turn them. As soon as I got clear of them, I stopped and listened for the cattle, but I could n’t

hear anything but the deep rolling sound made by the buffaloes. As they got farther and farther, and grew fainter and fainter, it reminded me of the sound of the sea as I heard it once at Cape May after a blow, when the waves were coming in and breaking on the shore. I almost forgot, for a few minutes, where I was, and what I was doing. Directly I roused up, and listened close, and thought I heard somebody hollering down the slope a good ways off. I listened again, and knew it was somebody with cattle. I started toward it. On the way I came right upon a bunch of cattle. They began to run, but I rode in front of them, and began singing and hollering, and they quieted down. Then I started them toward the noise I could now hear plainly. I found Capt. Dick and three other hands. As near as we could make out, for it was getting light now, about half the herd was there. We started back to camp with them. I never saw anything like that camp. The wagon was smashed all to pieces. The hind axle and wheels was twenty yards off. The cover was lying round in bits. The sides and coupling were piled up over the foreaxle and wheels. We pulled old José out from underneath, badly bruised up, but, by strange good luck, with no bones broken. He said he was in the wagon when they struck it, and it seemed to him like they knocked it twenty feet. The next thing he knew he was lying under the axle with the broken sideboards over him. Every now and then a buffalo would strike it and turn

a somerset, and he would hear him groan as he hit the ground. Most of them dodged around or jumped over. There were three dead ones lying near, one with his neck broken and doubled up under him so you could hardly see his head, and another with his back broken and his hind feet over his nose. Another had both hind legs broken, and still another was trying to limp off on three legs. We killed them both, to put them out of their misery. Our cooking utensils had been lying by the fire, and were smashed and battered all to pieces, and our clothing and blankets gone. A little white dust here and there was all there was of the flour sacks, the bacon could not be seen, nor a grain of the coffee. You can scarcely imagine how completely they had torn up and gutted our camp.

“I’ve seen several stampedes in my time, but, by George, this beats anything my eyes ever lit on,” said Capt. Dick, in a deep, low voice, as he sat on his horse looking at the wreck of the wagon. “Not a thing to eat but the dern’d buffaloes. I expect we are afoot, too. Did you send Nasho after the horses, Charley?”

“Yes, sir, and I saw him and Cracklins start on the run. They was n’t far off, for I heard the bell.”

“Well, if anybody can save ’em he will. He’d ’a’ been here before now with ’em if they had n’t stampeded, and there’s no tellin’ when they’ll stop, with such a scare as the buffaloes must have given ’em. I believe I’d a stampeded myself, if they had

run on to me when I was asleep. We'll be in a fix if we're afoot. Beelzebub is game, but them buffers made him spread himself to get out of the way. Has anybody seen Palmetto Charley?"

"You knows, Cap'n," said Gen. Foote, "I did n' go out fur to try and drive de buffers back, but jes' staid wid de cattle. We wuz a watchin' ob you all a tryin' to fight 'em back; when Mr. Palmetter Charley cummd up on he paint like de debbil wuz arter him, an' said fur us to turn de cattle to one side an' drike 'em away quick. We wuz a tryin' when de buffers hit us, an' I happ'n'd to be wid de cattle what went dis way, so I knows, Mr. Palmetter Charley he 's wid de toder part ob 'em, less 'n de buffers done runn'd ober him, an' I don't reck'n he's de man to git ketch'd dat way on ez good a horse ez dat paint ob hisn."

"Did the cattle they were driving stampede?"

"I dunno, sir. Arter de buffers runn'd in 'tween us an' dem I cud n't tell nofin more 'bout 'em. I knows dey run like de bery debbil, an' I specs dem did too."

"Well, boys, these infernal buffaloes have cut out some hard work for us, and the sooner we get at it the better. I reckon old José won't be ready to cook for us for a week. There's mighty little to cook, but we must have something. Get down, General, cut some steaks out of that cow, and a hump piece, and broil 'em the best you can. Maybe you can find salt enough laying around to season 'em a little.

The rest of you, herd the cattle while they feed. Keep 'em as close to camp as you can, but don't let 'em scatter too much. Break one of those marrow bones, General, and roast it over the fire ; it 'll be good to rub José's arms and legs with ; and as soon as you get the meat cooked, get on your horse and ride out to the herd, and let the boys take time about for grub."

"Dere won't be nuffin fur 'em to eat, Cap'n, but br'iled meat, an' I kin fotch dat to 'em 'thout deir cummin in."

"So you can. Be quick, and do your best. Do whatever you can for José ; it's a wonder he ain't killed. I'm going to take the horse tracks, and see if I can find anything about them. Come, Beelzebub, old fellow, let's move." And he rode off in the direction I had last heard the bell.

We were sitting on our horses, for the cattle were too restless to let us get down, eating our buffalo breakfast, when we saw Palmetto Charley, with some of the hands, coming up from the other side of the camp with a big bunch of cattle, more than half the herd. I sent Gen. Foote back to camp to cook more meat for them, and told him to be sure and save some pieces of hump and some ribs for Capt. Dick and Nasho and Cracklins. As soon as we got the cattle together again, we drove them down on to a flat that ended in a hollow, and took our places one on each side of it. Then the boys moved them slowly through the hollow between us, and we

counted them. When the last ones had gone through, Palmetto Charley turned toward me and said, —

“Twenty-seven hundred and twenty-four.”

“My count exactly.”

“We’re out two hundred and seventy-six, and likely to stay out of ’em, too. Getting cattle out of a herd of buffaloes on the run is a heap easier talked about than done. Yonder come the horses, though; we are in luck there.”

Capt. Dick, Nasho, and Cracklins came up with the horses. Not one was missing. They left them with us, and rode on to camp to get some meat for breakfast. It was n’t long till we saw them coming back again, each one with a piece of meat in his hands, eating as he came.

“Well, Palmetto,” said Capt. Dick, as he drew his rein and threw his leg over the horn of his saddle, “how many are we out?”

“Two hundred and seventy-six, sir, counting what you started with.”

“And I reckon I had my number last night. It hurts me, this thing does. I’ve been over the Trail several times, and it’s more cattle than I ever lost before all put together. It would be an easy matter if it was an ordinary stampede, but those dern’d buffaloes are twenty miles from here by now, and going like the devil, and there’ll be no cuttin’ cattle out of them when they stop, if I had spare hands to send after ’em, which I have n’t. I need my good hands, an it’d be no use to send

greenies. The Lord only knows where the buffers will run to before they stop. The Arkansas River bank full would n't stop 'em a second.

"Palmetto, I'll have to send you out to find a herd, and beg, borrow, or steal something to eat from 'em. I could stand the meat very well myself, but I can't do without coffee if there's any to be had. You had better ride one of the wagon mules, and lead the other to pack with, and if you can't get enough without you will have to go to the Santa Fé Railroad and buy some there. You'd better do that, anyhow, and get us some blankets. There ain't a rag of clothes or beddin' in camp. It's the most complete clean-out I ever heard of. Not a wheel even that'll roll. Take Cracklins with you, and send him back with the first coffee and grub you can borrow or buy, and don't forget there ain't a frying-pan or coffee-pot in camp, or a grain of salt. When you strike the railroad, telegraph Col. Hunt at Kansas City the fix we are in, and he'll send us grub and blankets as quick as they can get to us. Here's money enough for what we'll want, I reckon, and if it ain't, run the Colonel's credit, and I'll make it straight when I get there."

"Had n't you better give me an order?"

"I reckon they know you 'bout as well as they do me, but I'll give you a line."

He took out his blank book and pencil, wrote hurriedly, tore out the page, and handed it to Pal-

metto Charley. Then he began writing again, and directly he tore that out. "I ain't much on despatches, but I reckon this will about let the Colonel know the fix we are in."

"CAMP 40 MILES S. OF SANTA FÉ R. R.
APL. 24th, 1877.

"COL. W. S. HUNT,

St. James Hotel, Kansas City

"Run over by buffaloes. Two hundred and seventy-six head gone to the devil, wagon busted, not a mouthful to eat, a blanket or rag of spare clothes. Send outfit from Ellis on the run.

"CAPT. DICK."

Palmetto Charley took it and rode off toward camp.

"More brain and less tongue in his head than most any man I know that follows the Trail. I'll bet we have coffee for supper, and that if Col. Hunt is in Kansas City he gets that despatch before second relief goes on to-night. Palmetto will do to tie to every time; I hate to send him away when I need my best men so bad, but he'll do us more good that way than any other. Lord! how I do hate losing them beeves. It's the worst lick I ever had. Reckon Hunt'll think it's about time I was quitting the Trail and taking to herding in the pasture. Blast the luck! Who could 'a' helped it?"

"Capt. Dick, I've been studying over this thing ever since I found the cattle was gone, and if you

can spare us I'll take Nasho and see if we can't get them back again. It will be no trouble to follow their trail, and when they stop they will be tired and stiff, and I think, by watching our chance, we can run in and cut out our cattle and bring them back. I can't promise you, because I don't know much about buffaloes, but we'll do our best."

"By George, Charley, you're a trump. If anybody can get them bulls, you and Nasho are the boys to do it. But how am I to spare you? I haven't got but three hands left that are worth a cuss, and the bulls will be worse than ever. It must be done, though." As you say, when that herd stops, they're going to be tired and stiff, and most likely will be laying down mostly. The bulls will stick to them while they run, but when they stop they will be most sure to work out to one edge by themselves. Then will be your time. Be careful and go up to the herd on the lee side, and find out where the bulls are before you try it. Then work your way up gently, and maybe they'll let you work up among 'em by being easy about it, and cut out without a run. But if they make a break there ain't but one way to do, and that's to go for 'em and try and force 'em out. But look here, Charley, it was Injuns started them buffaloes, sure as you live, and apt as any way they may follow 'em up; an' if they do, and come 'cross you two boys by yourselves away from the Trail, they'll just lay you out to a dead certainty. I had n't thought of that before. I can't

trade you off for the chance of a bunch of beeves, nohow."

"Capt. Dick, seems to me the chance is the other way. The Indians are most certain to be to the left of us, and so are the bulk of the buffaloes. They are more likely to hunt up another drove than to follow up this one, which would take them clear away from the others, and if they should follow it up, me and Nasho ought to see them as soon as they do us, and I don't believe they have got any faster horses than Comanche and Spot. I ain't a bit afraid to try it, and I know Nasho will go with me."

"Yes, Charley, you're true grit, but I don't like the idea of sending two boys like you out on the prairie, where the red devils may run up on you, and nobody ever know to a certainty what became of you. If I could send Paimetto Charley with you, I wouldn't mind it half so much. I know there ain't any two harder boys to get away with west of the Mississippi River, but it ain't fair to put boys against men, and red devils at that. The soldiers keep 'em in so close nowadays they don't get many chances to raise hair, and they'd lift you boys to a certainty if they run on to you. Col. Hunt is able to lose them bulls, and he'll have to do it."

"But I don't believe the Indians are going to follow up that drove, Capt. Dick; most likely they've killed all they intend to out of it, and will stop to skin and dry the meat they have killed. We can catch up with the drove before night, and some time

to-morrow we ought to get our bulls out of them, and catch you again in three more days. A small bunch like that will out-travel the herd, and we'll put 'em through. We won't have to watch 'em at night, and won't lose any sleep. I don't want to go to Ellis without those cattle. Let us try it, Capt. Dick?"

"But there's nothing to eat to take with you, nor a blanket to cover with."

"We won't be any worse off than the rest at camp."

"Yes, you will. Palmetto Charley'll be certain to send us some flour and coffee and bacon to-night, and he may get some spare blankets, though I don't much look for any sleeping gear until Col. Hunt sends it."

"I think we would be poor excuses for bull whackers, Capt. Dick, if we couldn't live on buffalo meat for three or four days, and do without blankets. We have our saddle-blankets, and I've got some matches."

"Better let your blankets, and saddles too, stay on your horses, Charley; you don't know what minute you may have to jump and run. And you'll have to be mighty partickler about fires, too. A little fire shows a long way on a prairie like this, and the Injuns see everything. They've got nothing else to do but be on the lookout for deviltry of some kind."

"My idea about cooking is to make our fire, about sundown, in a hollow under a bluff where it won't show; and, by using little dry sticks and buffalo chips, there won't be smoke enough to show. After we cook meat enough for next day, we'll move camp two

or three miles, crawl into some hollow, and I reckon Indians will have to look close to find us; and if they do happen to trail us up, Rover will let us know they 're comin' in time to crawl our horses and light out from there.

"Right enough there, Charley, till you get the bulls, but after that you can't hide their trail. If the Indians follow you, there'll be nothing to do but drop 'em and run for it, and be sure you don't let 'em cut you off from the Trail. Take your compass and this spy-glass, and use it too, Charley. A man can't keep his eyes going too much when there are Injuns around, or his ears too wide open. There was a Winchester in the wagon, but I reckon it's busted to smithereens. Got any cartridges, Charley?"

"My belt is full, and my six-shooter in prime fix. And I know Nasho's got a lot, too."

"If I knew you'd have to pull a trigger, neither of you should go a step, but I hope you won't see any Injuns at all, and if you do you must cut and run for it. Dern the bulls; drop 'em like hot coals. If they don't git the bulge on you, and you ride right, they oughtn't ever to get a foot closer than when they start, and Comanche and Spot have as much bottom as the best of their everlasting ponies. I've never seen any other two boys that I'd risk on such a trip, and I hate to see you start, but I'm plum beat 'bout them bulls. Nigh on to three hundred is a sight to lose on one drive, and if you and Nasho don't get 'em they're gone to a plum certainty. I reckon you'll

have to try it, Charley. But do be careful ; I 'd never forgive myself for lettin' you go if anything was to happen to you. You 've no time to lose. Get Nasho, take all the cooked meat at camp, and strike out on their trail. If you don't catch us before, I 'll wait for you at the river this side of Dodge, and for the Lord's sake, Charley, don't lose time in gettin' back ; I 'll be on thorns till I see you again. Dern the buffaloes and the bulls ; why could n't they 'a' went somewhere else? Good by, my boy! Keep your eyes skinned, and if you see Injuns light out ; let the bulls go to thunder. I 'll send Nasho to you at camp."

Capt. Dick wrung my hand so hard it hurt, and rode off toward the herd, and I struck out for camp. I got meat enough to do us two days, tied it behind my saddle wrapped up in grass, gave Rover a few bites, and when Nasho came up I was ready, and we rode off on the track of the drove.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON TRAIL OF THE RUNAWAYS. AN OLD BUFFALO BULL. FINDING THE DROVE. CUTTING OUT THE CATTLE. BUFFALOES STAMPEDE AGAIN.

IT was no trouble to follow, for they had trampled the grass down so you could see their trail a mile ahead, and we moved along pretty lively. I asked Nasho what he thought started the buffaloes.

"Injuns huntin' 'em."

"What Indians?"

"Don't know; may be so Osage, may be so Kiowa, may be so Comanche. No can tell till I see camp."

"Do you think they will follow up this drove?"

"What for dey foller 'em up. Dere plenty more buff'loes where dese cum from, and dey not scared yit. If dey foller 'em at all, dey would been at dere heels when dey run on us."

"Do you think we are likely to meet any Indians on our trip?"

"No can tell. Injuns lib all roun' us, an' in spring ob year dey trabel and hunt heap. Trail runs towards Kiowas. Heap bad Injuns dem. Satanta

heap big chief, much bad Injun. Steal white chief's mules out ob he camp wid sojers all roun'. Heap smart Injun Satanta. Ugh! Hope we no see him, Satank needer. If dey catch us," he put one hand on top of his head, and with his knife in the other made a circle round it just above the temples. He could not have said "We'll lose our scalps" any plainer.

"But, Nasho, Satanta and Satank are in the penitentiary in Texas. They broke up a wagon train, stole the mules, took what they wanted from the wagons, and tied two of the wagoners to the wheels, and burnt them. They happened to go to their 'reservation' just at the time Gen. Sherman was there, and bragged about what they had done, and he arrested them and Big Tree, and sent them under guard to Texas to be tried, because it was in Texas they had burnt the men. On the way Big Tree jumped out of the wagon and tried to snatch a gun from a guard, and he fired, and wounded him so badly he died from it. Satanta and Satank were tried, and sentenced to be hung, but Gov. Davis said not to hang them, but to keep them in the penitentiary the rest of their lives, and make them work; and they are there now, if they ain't dead, or got away, and I reckon it would be a hard matter for them to get clear through Texas without being caught."

"Me heap glad hear dat. Dat white chief big fool for no hang 'em when he catch 'em. Dey burn white men, what for he no burn dem? Heap big

rascals dem. Dere plenty more. Lone Wolf big chief now. Bad Injun heap. Mose bad Satanta. Steal heap horses frum Texas and kill people too. No want to see Lone Wolf needer."

"Suppose we see Indians, Nasho, what must we do?"

"Run heap. No can fight heap Injuns. Dey no got no better horses dan Comanchë and Spot, and dey no can ketch us, if we no let 'em cut us off. Must run quick, and no stop while dey in sight."

"Well, I hope we won't see any, because I want to get our bulls back. Keep your eye open, Nasho."

"Nasho no sleep. Maybe so Carley see Injun yonder."

And he turned in his saddle and pointed in the direction from which we had come. I looked carefully, but could not see anything. I took out the glass and swept the prairie with it, watching closely for anything that might look like an Indian, but not a sign could I see.

"What do you mean, Nasho? I don't see anything."

"White man's glass eye good, but he no good as Injun's eye. Me see smoke."

Looking in the direction of his outstretched hand, I soon made out several light curls of smoke rising into the air. They were so light they could hardly be seen against the cloud, and were evidently miles beyond our camp.

"Injun cook buff'lo meat dere. Dey no trouble us. Hole up, Carley."

And he slipped off his horse, throwing his long reins down, and, unfastening his stake-pin, began to move carefully toward a big clump of tall prairie grass, whose dead tops stuck out of the green leaves below. Raising his arm almost as quick as a flash, he sent the pin whizzing into the grass, and, walking up to it, lifted out a prairie chicken with a broken neck. Then, taking off his hat, he stooped down and began to put in eggs. I rode up, and counted, as he took them out of the nest, sixteen; half a hatful.

"Maybe they are rotten, Nasho."

"Nasho know good egg when he see him. Try."

And he handed me three. They looked fresh and clear, but I put them to my ear and shook them. Good to a certainty. But how are we going to carry them? Nasho took his knife, opened the breast of the prairie chicken, took out the entrails, and put the eggs inside. He got in eight. Then he took a string from the horn of his saddle, and, wrapping the chicken up in long grass, tied her up tight and fast, and fastened her behind his saddle with his saddle-strings. Then he took off his handkerchief from his neck—you know bull-whackers always wear big cotton handkerchiefs tied loosely round their necks, so they can get at them handy—and, wrapping up the rest of the eggs one at a time, handed it to me.

"Put 'em in *cojinillos* (saddle-pockets). Dey no break now."

I felt let down a good deal as we rode along the buffalo trail again. I thought I had pretty good

eyes, and had learnt to use them pretty well, yet I could hardly see the smoke when it was pointed out to me. I never would have noticed it by myself. And that smoke meant Indians, and told where they were, and what they were doing, as plainly as if I had seen them. Nasho can read Indian sign as well as I can signs on stores. Then I couldn't see the prairie chicken, though I knew from his motions right where it was. The chicken and eggs would make us two meals if we were short of meat and didn't want to fire a gun, yet I would have ridden by without ever seeing it. Well, live and learn, as uncle says. One can't watch too closely, or keep it up too much on the prairies, that's certain. When they are on the watch, and used to the prairies, I believe white men can see nearly as well as Indians, but the trouble is we get careless, and get to thinking about other things, and forget to keep up a watch, but Indians never do. That's their business, and they attend to it. It's life and death with them.

About five miles from camp, as we reached the crest of a swell, we saw a buffalo in the hollow at its foot. He was very lame, but limping along, making the best time he could. When we rode up to him he tried to charge us, but was too lame to run. His shoulder seemed to be badly sprained. Most likely he had either run against the wagon, or fell over another buffalo that had. He was a big old bull; and as he stood with his head down, his fiery eyes almost hid by his shaggy hair, whisking his tail and

dropping on one knee, as he tried to paw the ground, uttering a low, hoarse bellow, he looked almost frightful. Neither Comanche nor Spot were afraid of him, though they kept up a sharp watch on him, so that we could ride as close as we pleased. Nasho showed me where the Indians always try to shoot them or lance them in hunting. It is just behind the shoulder, and about two thirds of the way from the top. The hunter is nearly always a little behind the buffalo, and a ball or arrow striking there, if sent hard enough, is almost certain to pierce the heart. Farther back through the lungs is a good shot, too, but they will often run several yards, or turn and fight after being shot there. Through the upper part of the neck is a dead shot, and anywhere through the spine breaks the back, so they can't run another step. Square in front, just above the little curly spot in the middle of the forehead, is a sure shot, but it takes a good rifle to send a ball through the thick skull. It is twice as thick as that of a beef.

After riding round and looking at him carefully for a few minutes, we left him and kept the trail. Nasho said the chances were that the wolves would get him that night. If they happened to strike his trail, they would follow it up and worry him out by pretending to jump on him until they could pull him down, and once they got him down they would make short work of him. And even if he hobbled on till he reached the herd, he said other bulls would be certain to hook him to death.

About three o'clock, and fifteen miles from camp, we came in sight of the drove. They were scattered about feeding very quietly, a good many lying down here and there amongst them. Our cattle had worked off to one edge, and on the south side of a little hollow between two slopes. Most of the drove were on the north side of the hollow. I took out the field-glass, and looked through the herd carefully. All of the cattle were together. There was n't a stray beef in the drove.

Nasho put his finger in his mouth, kept it there half a minute, and then held it up above his head. I knew that was to find out which way the air was stirring, for there was no wind that we could feel. The finger gets warm, and, when taken out and held up, will get cold first on the side the air is stirring.

"No any wind, Carley ; what you say we do ?"

"Slip down that hollow as easy as we can, and if they see us and run, dash in and cut off our cattle, and run them off the other way."

"Dat right ; you go 'head, and let horse stop ebery two, tree steps, and bite grass. Maybe so dey tink we buff'loes. No scare buff'loes if can help."

We rode down into the hollow, and then along it slowly toward the drove. Nasho kept about fifteen feet behind me, and every two or three steps we would let our horses stop and pick a few bites of grass. When we got in a quarter of a mile of them we slipped off of our horses and walked beside them, keeping on the farther side from the drove, so they

would n't be so apt to notice us. They were getting farther and farther from the hollow, and I was afraid every minute the beeves would turn and cross it to them. We moved along as fast as we could without attracting the attention of the buffaloes, letting our horses feed more and more as we came nearer, until we were between the drove and the cattle. Neither of them seemed to have noticed us at all. There was a small water-hole just ahead of me in the hollow, with only a little water in it, and a bluff bank six or eight feet high on the north side. I worked my way to that, and made Comanche step into it. Then I crawled on to his back without raising myself much above the saddle, and, lying along his neck, rode him out, and let him feed toward the beeves. Turning my head, I saw Nasho was on his horse the same way, and moving him slowly toward the cattle. As we got up to them we raised ourselves a very little, and, speaking to them like we do in driving, only lower, we moved around them, and started them off very slowly, letting them pick grass as they went. They did n't scare at us at all, but moved off as they always do when we start them toward the Trail after feeding. I looked over my shoulder toward the buffaloes, but they were quiet. Some of 'em had their heads up, and were looking at us, but they did n't seem alarmed. Just then a grasshopper, or some other bug, flew up and into Comanche's nose, and he jumped and snorted, and I heard them start. Away they went, like thunder, and away went our

cattle too. The slope was tolerably steep, and by the time they got to the top, and found there was nothing after them, they began to quiet down, and we rounded them up a little.

At the bottom of the slope on whose crest we were was a creek, which made a bend there almost in the shape of a horseshoe. On the north side the bluff was steep all the way, but on the south the valley sloped away gently to the foot of the next rise. There were a few old cottonwoods along the creek, and a patch of dogwood and haw bushes at the mouth of the horseshoe bend. It looked like it had been cut out for a camp. Down the valley about a quarter of a mile, and close to the creek, were about a hundred buffaloes feeding and lying down.

It was so warm and close I took off my coat and tied it behind my saddle.

"Umph!" grunted Nasho, "you want blanket 'fore morning," and he pointed to the north. It was one great bank of deep blue, toward which, from east and west, light clouds were slowly moving. Overhead the sky was perfect and clear, flecked here and there with light rolls of flossy clouds, that made me think of summer. I turned toward the west. The sun, not an hour high, was hidden by banks of clouds that seemed to lie in layers with their edges overlapping, and as bright as gold, from the rays of the sun behind shining on them. Lower down, the sky seemed to be a sea of liquid fire.

I did n't need any thermometer to tell me that we

would need blankets sure enough before morning, and we didn't even have overcoats. There were blankets enough, though, on the backs of those buffaloes, and we must have them, and that quick, for at sundown, at the outside, the norther would be on us, and maybe before.

CHAPTER IX.

A NORTHER. BUFFALO MEAT FOR SUPPER, AND BUFFALO HIDES FOR BEDCLOTHES. A HUNTER'S CAMP. MAKING WOLF-SKIN OVERCOATS. A HARD DRIVE. BACK TO CAMP AGAIN.

“NASHO, I am a better shot with a pistol than you; you turn the cattle back over this hill so the buffaloes won't see them, and I'll slip down that hollow and kill two or three of them for their hides. When you hear me stop shooting, put the cattle in that bend, and come and help me skin them.”

“Me come, Carley. Dat right.”

I got down to the creek without their seeing me, and hurried along as fast as I could, keeping close to the creek. When I got in two hundred and fifty yards of them, I slipped off Comanche, and took it afoot, bending low as I walked, and stopping perfectly still whenever one seemed to be looking toward me. In this way I got in fifty yards of them. Then I lay down and crawled, following the bend of the creek until I was opposite them. There were a dozen in twenty steps of me. I fired at a bull standing broad-

side to me, aiming behind the shoulder, and down he tumbled, and began kicking. The rest threw up their heads, but instead of running away stood looking at the one that was down, and several walked up toward him. In half a minute I fired again, and got another, and then another. At the third shot they started and ran, but as a big bull turned his broadside to me, I let him have it, and down he came. Then I jumped up and fired at a young cow that was going straight away from me, and she turned a somerset, and never got up. I turned round to see what Comanche was doing, but he stood still, with head up, watching what was going on. Farther on up the valley I saw Nasho coming into it through a hollow that ran down from the north.

I went to the cow I had shot and cut her throat, and then began skinning one of the bulls. Directly Nasho came up and helped me, and by sundown we had two of them skinned. We did n't peel the legs, but just cut them off square with the body. As the sun went down the norther came with a rush and roar like a thunder-storm. I jumped on Comanche, ran up to the cattle, and coralled them in the bend, where they were sheltered by the bluff bank on the north. They seemed quiet enough, so I left them, and hurried back to Nasho. He was at work on the third bull, and it did n't take us very long to peel him, for we did n't have to be careful about skinning. Then we each fastened a rope to the same hide, and, bringing up our horses, got on them, and dragged it to the

thicket at the mouth of the bend. Leaving it there, we went back for the second. It must have been eight o'clock by the time we got to camp with that, and it was stinging cold. The wind came as if it would go right through us, but we started back again. That time we cut off some hump pieces and some ribs and steak out of the cow, and took the tongues of all of them, and started back with the third hide. Pulling was slow work over the grass, and it was so cold it seemed to me I would freeze, anyhow, but at last we made it. Taking off our bridles and loosening our girths, we staked out our horses, and I began getting dry wood for a fire. It was n't long before I had a lively one going on the south side of the thicket. Nasho had cut two forks and some poles, and put up a skeleton framework like half the roof of a house. It was on the north side of the fire, with the open end to the south. We took one of the largest hides and laid it over this framework, and fastened it down on the north with wooden pins driven through the edge of the hide into the ground. Then we cut some brush tops, and filled in the ends with them and grass, and spread down another hide, flesh side down, inside, and our camp was ready. It is what is called an open face camp, and glad enough we were to crawl into it, for we were cold, tired, and hungry. In a few minutes we had meat cooking on forked sticks, and it did n't more than get hot through before we began on it. If we had only had some salt and coffee it would have been a real good supper, but

meat without salt always tastes to me like there was something needed to finish it up. Nasho don't care for it so much. He got used to eating it that way when the Indians had him.

Before we went to bed we brought our horses up and tied them right at the fire, so that they would be ready if the cattle should run, and that if the Indians should come along they could n't steal them without waking us up. I was n't uneasy about that much, because Nasho said the Indians would n't be moving as cold a night as that, and I knew Rover would let us know if anybody came about. I believe Comanche would himself. Nothing ever comes round that he don't see it, and I don't believe he would let an Indian come up to him without snorting and kicking. We felt sure the cattle would n't try to leave the bed-ground, because it was so well sheltered from the wind by the bluff, so we didn't keep up a watch. They could n't get out of the bend without coming right by us, and I did n't believe they could do that without waking us up. I was glad there was n't much chance of their running, because it was so cold, and we did n't have any overcoats. Just before we lay down we heard a pack of wolves down the valley, and Nasho said, —

“Dey find our meat dreckly.”

“If it was n't so awful cold, Nasho, I'd go down there and hide near the buffaloes, and kill two or three of 'em.”

“Too much heap cold. Dey eat so much to-night,

dey no go far, and you take Rover and find 'em in morning. Dey no can run much, dey be so full. You catch 'em easy. We no can move camp to-morrow. Bulls no will trabel 'gainst wind."

We had a buffalo hide for cover, and slept very well, though I waked up once cold and made up more fire. The cattle were quiet, and everything was still, and I lay down and went to sleep again.

In the morning we were up by daylight, staked out our horses, and cooked our breakfast. We had the prairie chicken and half of the eggs, and some buffalo hump. Nasho roasted his eggs in the ashes, but I boiled mine in my tin cup. Eggs are not very good without salt; I don't know anything that needs salt more, unless it is bread and Irish potatoes. They taste like they had n't been finished. Still I was glad to have them. The prairie chicken was real good, and did n't seem to need salt as much as the buffalo meat. We broiled it on the coals.

After breakfast we turned the cattle out to graze. They were restless from the cold, and moved about a great deal, but I noticed, whenever they would get to the foot of the slope where the wind could strike them, they would turn back. About ten o'clock they began to lie down. The wind was blowing too hard to think of driving them against it, as we would have had to do to strike the trail going toward Dodge, so I told Nasho I would go and see if I could find the wolves. He said he did n't mind staying with the cattle; that the Indians would n't be likely to be

moving, because it was so cold. So I called Rover, and rode off down the valley.

As soon as I got in sight of the buffaloes I saw they had been there, because there was n't anything left of them but the heads and bones. They had stripped them clean. I told Rover to hunt them up, and in two or three minutes he struck the trail and started off. It led right down the valley. We had gone about three miles, I reckon, when I saw a big gray wolf jump up in front of Rover and start off, but he could n't go very fast. I called Rover in, and went for him, and in a hundred yards Comanche was on him, and I tumbled him over. I whirled round, and saw them making off in every direction. As Nasho had said, they were so full they could n't go fast, and I overhauled first one, and then another, until I had killed four. By that time the rest were out of sight; and, not wanting to run Comanche any more, I did n't try to follow any of them up, but rode back to the first one I had killed. As I sat on my horse looking at him, I thought about a wolf-skin overcoat I had seen at the Centennial, and jumped down and went to work on him with my knife. It was sharp, and I worked fast, and was n't long in peeling him. I left the head on, because I wanted to skin that more carefully at camp, where it would be warmer, and because I wanted the brains to dress the hide with. I skinned four, and by that time was so cold I concluded to let the other one alone. They were all large ones, the big gray wolf of the moun-

tains and prairies, and I thought four hides would make two coats, one for me and one for Nasho. So I dragged the hides together, fastened my rope to them, and started for camp. As I got nearly to the place where the first wolf had jumped up, I thought I caught the glint of something bright, and looking again closely, saw a wolf's head sticking out of a hole. Without stopping Comanche, I drew my six-shooter and fired ; on riding up to the hole I found I had him. It was all I could do to drag him out by the ears, he was so heavy. He had gorged himself so he was all swelled out, which I reckon was the reason he did n't run with the rest. He was such a big one that I could n't let his hide go. When I got it off I did n't want to untie the others, and was thinking about throwing it over Comanche's back, when Rover put his cold nose against my hand. I threw the skin over his back, cut some little holes in it and fastened it under his belly and around his neck, and mounted again. He did n't like it, and the head dangling under his neck got in his way, but he did n't try to run away, as many dogs would have done, but trotted along as usual.

I could n't see anything of the cattle as I got in sight of camp, and did n't like that. Where could they be? Leaving the hides at our tent, I rode to where I had last seen them, and hollered to Rover, —

“Hie on, old fellow ; hunt 'em up !”

He started on the run, and Comanche kept right behind him. The trail wound round the valley a



SHOOTING THE WOLVES. Page 117.

while, and then led off due south, but I could tell from the tracks and the grass they had not stampeded. Nasho was with them, I was sure of that, and I knew they would n't get far before Comanche overhauled them. I think I had gone about four miles when I came in sight of them, nearly at the foot of a long slope. They were travelling lively, and Nasho was in front doing his best to hold them in, but as fast as he would check one end of the line the other would move past, and he would have to go to them. I gave one whoop, let Comanche out, and in less than five minutes we had them rounded up in the hollow. I could n't have done it by myself any more than Nasho, but both of us together could handle them easy enough.

"Me heap glad you come, Carley; no could stop bulls. What we do now? We no can dribe 'em back to camp 'gainst wind."

"They've got to go, Nasho. They had no business to come here, and I ain't going to give up our camp for them. And the sooner we start back with them the better."

"All right, Carley. Me no tink we can dribe 'em back, but we try."

The wind did n't strike them full down in the hollow, and they was n't very hard to turn round and start, but when they got to the top of the hill they kept turning round, and it was only by the hardest kind of work we could keep them moving. We had to keep on the gallop nearly all the time, dashing first

at one and then at another, and hollering and yelling until the wind nearly took our breath. Cold? Ugh! It makes me shiver now to think about it. It seemed like I would freeze. But I was determined they should go back, if it took all day. At the top of every hill we had them to fight again, and several times they tried to make a run of it, but we were too quick for them, and at last we got them back to the valley and into the bend again. Tired? Were n't we, though! There were three or four headstrong brutes that I promised myself to get even with before they got to Ellis.

When we got the fire going again, Nasho told me they had fed out to the foot of the slope, and all of a sudden they all threw up their heads and started south, and he never could check them

"There's a buffalo cow in the herd, Nasho; when did she get in?"

"In first big hollow. Injun arrow in her, and two wolves was followin' her, and when she see bulls, she run into 'em and stay dere. Arrow shot in two days back."

"There are some wintered beeves in the herd too."

"Dey bin in eber since we find bulls, 'cause dey no come in to-day. Must bin in drove buff'loes. Specs bin wid 'em long time."

"How many are there?"

"Me no could count, but tink 'bout t'irty. Heap big bulls."

"But how comes it we did n't see them before?"

"Too much busy. Dey bound to hab bin wid buff'loes, 'cause dey no come in to-day certain. Nasho no sleep, and he no see 'em come in."

As soon as we had eaten dinner we went to work on the wolf-skins. We skinned two of the heads very carefully, but was n't particular about the others. Nasho had picked up several thin sharp-edged rocks, and we fleshed the hides with them. Then we broke open the skulls with our picket pins, and rubbed them well with the brains. Then we cut little holes along the edges, so that by putting one skin on the breast and another on the back, we could draw them close together with strings over the shoulders and round our bodies, and have first-rate overcoats, only they did n't have any sleeves. We could have put sleeves to them, but would have had to cut up the skins so much to make them fit, that it would have spoiled them a good deal. We put the hair side in, to keep from greasing our clothes. We made ear-flaps to go over our hats and keep our ears warm out of two legs. As we still had plenty of meat, we agreed to let the buffalo cow stay in the herd and drive her to camp. She was n't badly wounded.

The next morning the sun came out bright and pretty, though the wind blew a little and the air was real cold. We got breakfast early, packed up the rest of our meat, gave our wolf-skins another rubbing with brains, put them on, each one fastening

on the other's coat, and after the cattle had grazed awhile, started toward the Trail, in the direction of Fort Dodge. The trail the buffaloes had made led northeast, so that we had n't come squarely out of our way. We drove hard, for a small bunch of cattle travel faster than a large drove, and just at dusk we reached the herd. Capt. Dick came galloping up to meet us. He shook us both heartily by the hand and broke out, —

“By George, you boys trump anything this side of the Mississippi, and I reckon that country holds a full deck. I was half afraid you would freeze, and here you are in wolf-skin overcoats. I know you are in there; I see your heads and legs sticking out. Brought buff'lo meat with you too. Think there were n't nothin' in camp to eat. You shall have your fill of fritters and coffee to-night, if Cracklins has to sit up half the night to cook for you. Bet you have n't missed a meal, though, since you been gone. Catch two as live boys as you going hungry, when anything that wore hair was in the country. By George, you don't know how glad I am to see you young ones back again all right! I'd treat all hands if there was any whiskey in camp. We'll make it up on coffee, though, and nary guard do you youngsters stand to-night. Come on, boys Coffee and fritters, — oodles of 'em.”

As I dismounted at the fire, Cracklins got up from his cooking, and called out, —

“Hi! Mass Charley mity glad to see you back

ag'in. Powerful cold las' nite wuz; de win' blow'd like it had been saunt fur to fetch sumbody. Golly, Mass Charley," as he caught sight of my overcoat, "did dat wind turn you wrong side out? 'Pears like you's got you clothes on inside ob you."

CHAPTER X.

PALMETTO CHARLEY'S STORY. HOW HE WAS CAPTURED BY THE INDIANS AFTER A STAMPEDE, AND TURNED LOOSE NAKED, AND HOW HE GOT EVEN WITH THEM.

WE did have fritters and coffee for supper, and I reckon Cracklins got tired of cooking for us before we were through. If you never have done without bread for three or four days, you don't know how good it tastes when you get some again, or how much you can eat. Capt. Dick did n't want either of us to stand guard that night, but we told him we had n't lost any sleep, and were just as able to sit up as any of the boys. He said the beeves we brought in belonged to Mr. Illiff, who had a big ranch at Julesburg, in Colorado, and that he ought to pay us at least half of their value for saving them, as he most likely never would have seen them again if we had n't got them. He said it was a wonder they did n't break back to the buffaloes when they stampeded, they had been with them so long.

After the rest had gone to sleep (those who were not on guard), Palmetto Charley told me of one of

his adventures that I think you will like to hear. He don't often get to talking, but when he does I am always sure of learning something. He had been asking me about our trip, and began his story by saying, —

“I expect it's a lucky thing, Charley, that norther came up. I learned at Fort Dodge that a good many Indians had left their reservations, and were out hunting, and if any of them had come across you they would have taken everything you had, and maybe killed you beside.”

“But I don't think they could have caught us, Mr. Charley Comanche and Spot are both fast, and have plenty of bottom, and we are light weight.”

“Most likely, Charley, you would had no chance to run. They always keep scouts out on the hills, and if they had seen you first, as they would have been almost certain to have done, they would have slipped round and run upon you in some hollow before you knew it. They are wild men as much as the wild cat is a wild cat, and just as much more cunning than any wild animal as a man is smarter than a brute. All their sense runs in that direction, and the main study of their lives is how to get the better of each other in stealing and fighting. They don't believe in square, open fighting, but in sneaking upon each other in the night, laying ambushes, and every kind of cunning trick by which they may get a chance to kill without running any danger themselves. If ever they get after you on the prairie,

Charley, take a bee line for the nearest shelter, — post, house, thicket, ravine, or whatever is nearest and safest, — and keep it. They will try to cut you off, and if ever you get to circling they will do it too. But if you can get any kind of shelter, if it's nothing but a buffalo wallow, and have a good rifle and know how to use it, they will be very careful about charging you. They will ride round a great deal, and whoop and yell, and try to frighten you, but just lie still, take it easy, and don't pull trigger unless you are sure of getting your man, and they'll soon give you up as a bad job. If they try the lying behind their horses' dodge, as they are sure to do, watch close, and if you can't get a chance at a head, put a ball through the knee as it sticks over the back of the horse, and the owner will tumble nearly every time, and you will most likely get another and fairer shot at him. If you don't, he's laid up for that fight, and not good for much the rest of his life. A flesh-wound hardly ever hurts an Indian much, and he will get well of a bad shot through the body quicker than most white men, because they live so simply, drink nothing but water (because they can't get anything else), and are in the open air so much that fever has a poor chance; but break a bone and he can't set that, and he's too restless to lie still, so that if it don't kill him he is sure to have a false joint. An Indian would almost as soon be killed as to be crippled.

“I was with a herd once in Idaho on the way to

Boise City, and had camped for the night after a bright, pleasant day that made one glad just to live. The air there in summer is so dry and pure you nearly always feel well and lively, no matter what happens. That night, about twelve o'clock, there came up one of the worst storms I have ever been in, and I have sampled a big lot in nearly every quarter of the country. The thunder fairly shook us in our saddles, and the lightning was terrible. Next day I saw great holes and gashes in the ground where it had struck. The bulls stood it about an hour, and then they broke. I happened to get hold of a bunch that took off to themselves, and soon got in the lead, but it was no use. There was no stop in 'em, and I just had to let them go, and stay with them.

"It was too dark to see anything except by the flashes, and as the storm began to pass away, they were not so frequent. All of a sudden my horse stopped so quick I came near going over his head, and the whole bunch drew up as if every one had had a Mexican on his back with a jaw-breaking bridle-bit in his mouth, and had felt the pull. I knew there was something wrong in front of us, but could n't see what it was. We stood there about two minutes, when there came a tremendous clap of thunder. I felt my horse draw himself together, rise in the air, and in a second we were belly deep in a bog. The bulls were all around us, snorting and bellowing, and making their joints crack as they tried to pull

through. Lucky for me my horse was an old traveller in that country, and when he began wallowing from side to side like a buffalo, I felt sure he would get out if some of the bulls did n't get afoul of him and hook him, or sink him so deep he could n't draw himself out.

"By the first flash of lightning I saw that we were nearly through, and unfastening my rope, and coiling it on my arm, I stood up in my saddle, gathered myself together, and lit out for the bank, and hit it, too. Lightened of my weight, and helped by my pulling, my horse soon came through. I led him away from the bank about fifty yards, to give the bulls a chance to come out, and stood by him to let him breathe, watching the cattle in the marsh whenever a flash came, and never dreaming of their running after such a pull, when there came another tremendous clap, and off they went again. Of course I was with them, and stayed with them till they stopped, and then rounded them up, and when they began to lie down I lay down, too, and got a nap before day. I counted them next morning, and found I had a rise of three hundred, — a pretty good bunch to take back to camp.

"I need n't tell you I was ready for breakfast early, and not a mouthful to eat did I have. I could n't leave the herd to hunt, but it was n't long before they put up a jack-rabbit, and I tumbled him over with a ball from my pistol, made me a fire by a water-hole, and soon had him broiling over it. I had

just finished off the second hind leg when I heard a horse snort, and, looking up, saw a dozen Indians all around me. I knew they had me. They were too close for me to give them a race, and too many to fight with the advantage they had, so I just pretended like I was used to have Indians take breakfast with me every morning, and offered the first one that walked up and called out, 'How,' a piece of rabbit, at the same time taking a foreleg myself. They were Brule Sioux, I knew from their moccasins, and as ugly a lot of red devils as I ever happened on, and I have seen average lots of most of the tribes in the West.

"They asked for coffee in broken English, but I told them I had left camp in a night stampede, and did n't have any. Directly two or three of them came up with some fresh ribs and steaks, which they began to cook, and I knew from that they had killed a beef. Thinks I to myself, Looking out for your belly has put your neck in a halter, old fellow, but it was no use crying over spilt milk. One of them told me by signs he wanted to look at my pistol. I had a heap rather have let him have a ball out of the muzzle, but there was no help for it, so I handed it over. Then he wanted the belt, and when I handed that to him he very coolly put the pistol in it and buckled it around his waist. When they got through eating they stripped me naked, gave me a few parting kicks and cuffs, and rode away, taking my horse and the cattle.

“By good luck, after skinning and cleaning my rabbit, I had laid my knife down in the grass, and they did n’t happen to see that; and as soon as they were over the hill I got it, went to the beef they had killed, cut out some steaks, skinned off a section of hide, and went back to my fire, and while my meat was cooking I made me a rough pair of moccasins, a skull cap, waistband, and leggins. Putting them on, when done, I took enough meat for a couple of meals, and struck out for camp. Pretty much all the rest of the cattle had been got together, and another herd had come up, so I got the boss to let me have a couple of hands that I thought could be depended on, and with a Winchester and six-shooter apiece, and plenty of cartridges, we struck out for the place where they had set me afoot, and reached it before sundown, and got on their trail. It was a clear, starlit night, and trailing was easy enough. I reckon it was twelve o’clock when we saw their camp ahead of us in a hollow. They had so little idea of being followed that they had turned the cattle loose, and did n’t have out any guard. I knew they were all armed, but only three of them had breech-loaders, — Spencer carbines, — the rest had only army muskets. The odds were against us, but we had n’t come for a pleasure ride or a scout, so we rode up as close as we dared, hitched our horses, and then crawled along on our bellies until we were in twenty yards of them. We each picked our man, and as the rest jumped up let them have it as fast as

we could load. They were so completely surprised that they hustled to their horses, lit on to them, and rolled without waiting to see how many were after them. We ran to the horses they left, jumped on them bareback, followed them a few hundred yards, firing as fast as we could, to make them think there was a crowd of us, and then turned back and got our own horses, and rode up to their camp again. We had got seven of them dead, and a good chance of one or two more having bullets in them by way of remembrance. I got my horse and pistol, and could have gotten some of my clothes, for two of the dead Indians had part of them on, but I would n't touch 'em after being on their dirty carcasses.

“The cattle had stampeded at the firing, but they did n't go far, and we soon found them, and, lest the Indians should turn the tables on us, we just put in a night march, and never stopped until we landed them in the herd again. And I don't think Mr. Brule Sioux made much off of Charley Hampton that load of poles.”

CHAPTER XI.

TURNING OVER THE HERD. A TALK ABOUT OUR
TRIP. CHARLEY RECEIVES TWO FINE RIFLES.
ON THE ROAD.

COL. HUNT met us at Dodge City with a wagon, provisions, and blankets. He was glad to get his cattle back again, though he said nobody could have helped losing them. He said he had sold the herd to be delivered at Ellis, and hoped Nasho and me would go back with Capt. Dick and stay on the ranch all the time, and he would give each of us fifty head of cattle to start with. I thanked him, and told him I wanted to go to the Black Hills as soon as we got through with the cattle. He said he would see us at Ellis when the cattle were delivered, and that he would sell Mr. Illiff's beeves, and turn half the money over to us for saving them. I told him we didn't charge anything for that; that we found them with the herd, and brought all together: but he said it was only fair, for he would have lost all but for us, and any stockman would be glad to pay half in such a case.

He heard us talking about killing the buffalo cow,

and told me not to do that, but to keep her in the herd till we got to Ellis, and he thought he could sell her for me in Kansas City or St. Louis. He invited Capt. Dick and Nasho and me to dinner with him at the hotel, gave us the best dinner they could get up, and sent out a lot of cakes and pies, and sardines and beer, to the boys at camp.

From there on to Ellis we had an easy-going time of it, and nothing particular happened. Col. Hunt met us at Ellis, and the cattle were delivered the day after we got there. The man he sold to wanted hands to drive them to Ogalalla, in Nebraska, but none of our boys would go but Carter and Billy McGlossin. Col. Hunt had taken a great liking to Palmetto Charley, and engaged him to go back to Dodge City with him, and take charge of a herd he had bought to be delivered there, and then to go to his ranch in Texas when the season was over. Palmetto Charley said he had been nearly everywhere but to Texas, and this was too good a chance to go there to lose. Capt. Sheidley, who bought the herd, tried hard to persuade Capt. Dick and Nasho and me to drive for him, but, though it was n't much out of our way, it was too slow travelling, and we wanted to be moving.

Col. Hunt had sold our buffalo cow to a man in St. Louis, who wanted to tame her and keep her in his grounds. She had got a great deal gentler, and we drove her into the shipping-pen with a bunch of cattle, and then worked them out and left her in.

She was to be shipped, with two or three car-loads of beeves, to St. Louis. We got fifty dollars for her, delivered at the shipping-pen at Ellis.

When the herd had been delivered and the hands paid off, Col. Hunt invited Capt. Dick, Palmetto Charley, Nasho, and me to the hotel, to stay that night. He told Cracklins to go there too, and get his meals, and find some place to sleep, and he would pay for it. After supper we were sitting out on the gallery at one end by ourselves, and he asked us what our plans were. Capt. Dick told him we had a notion of going to the Black Hills.

"Well, Capt. Dick, you are about the last man I would have picked for an honest miner. You ain't going back on me and the bulls, are you?"

"Oh, no, Colonel. I'll be at the ranch again this fall ready for work. Charley wants to go there, and me to go with him, and I reckon I'll have to go. I'm not calculatin' on gettin' a fortune, but if we have good luck we'll make better than bullwhacker's wages, and if we don't we'll just be out our time and work."

"I expect there would be a good chance to sell a drove of beeves up there by butchering them, and good money made at it. I'll go in with you if you say so, and get the cattle."

"Thank you, Colonel, but I believe me and Charley have got our fill of bull-driving just now. Of course, if you was in a pinch, and needed help, you could count on us for anywhere. You may thank Charley

here for not bein.' out nearly three hundred head by that buffalo run. I never felt as cut down at losing cattle in my life as I did then, and they would have been clean gone but for Charley and Nasho."

"I have n't forgotten that. What's your route to the Black Hills?"

"Haven't thought much about it, Colonel. I don't feel like I was bossing this outfit, and have n't studied it out. Reckon we had better take the Trail to Ogalalla on the U. P., keep up the railroad to Cheyenne, and then take the stage road to Deadwood. I'm tired of the old Trail, too."

"Capt. Dick, I have been studying about it with a map, and I think we can do better than that. I'd like to go to Kansas City, and then up the Missouri River by steamer to old Fort Sully, and there cut across to the Hills, but that would cost too much, and take us right through the Sioux country. By going up higher to Bismarck, we would have a travelled road to follow, but that costs too much to think about. Then we might strike straight from here to Cheyenne, but that would take us across the Bad Lands, and through the Sioux country, too."

"The Sioux are all round Deadwood, Charley. There's hardly a week that they don't kill somebody, and sometimes a whole party, and very often it's every day. You can't get there without going through them."

"Yes, but, Col. Hunt, by taking the stage road from Cheyenne, we can get company, and will stand

a better chance than to strike across the country by ourselves."

"Then why not take Capt. Dick's route?"

"I am like Capt. Dick, sir; I want to get off the Trail. We can strike from here straight to Cheyenne, and cross the South Platte at the old crossing near old Fort Morgan. It will be shorter, and we'll have a better chance to find game on the road, and I think we will have a pleasanter time than if we took the Trail. We may have to make one or two long camps, and have two or three pretty dry ones, but we will get through all right. Don't you think that will be the best route, Capt. Dick?"

"I reckon your head is about level, Charley, and I see you have been studying it out. There's some pretty dry country both this and t' other side of the South Platte, but I reckon we can make it. I'm agreeable to tryin' it, anyhow."

"You can make it on that line, though, as Charley says, you may have two or three long camps, and some dry ones. How are you going? with pack-mules?"

"Not any pack-mules for me, Colonel, if you please. I've got so used to havin' a wagon along, that I'm spoilt. When there ain't any way to get around it I can take a pack-mule, and go as far and as long as anybody, but I'll take a wagon every time when I can get one. And if there have n't been any wagon tracks made over that line, it's time it was done and we'll do it. When you've got a wagon you're

at home, and rain or shine don't make much difference, but a pack-horse never gives you nothing to tie to. I reckon a man gets less good out of a wagon bullwhacking than anything else he can follow, but it's a sort of home even to the bullwhackers."

"What will you do with your horses?"

"Why, Colonel, anybody would think you was some Cape Cod fisherman that did n't know horses was made to ride. What should we do with 'em but ride 'em, I'd like to know? Do you think we are going to jine the infantry?"

"Not much. You are too thoroughbred a Texan for that, not to say lazy, when it comes to footing it. But what is your wagon for?"

"To carry grub and blankets, and plunder, and the cook. What are the horses for, is what I want to know."

"For somebody to steal on the road, or after you get there."

"Seems to me like after taking care of many a thousand head of bulls, and several hundred head of horses, for you for the last ten years, I ought to be able to take care of one horse for myself now."

"Don't get touchy, Capt. Dick. You know there ain't a man on the Trail, from end to end, that I'd trust with my last bull as quick as I would with you. Don't I always give you the worst bulls I've got, and the greenest hands?"

"That you do for a fact, Colonel. It's a plum shame the way you played off on me this trip. I don't

care how bad the bulls are when I've got anybody to follow and stay with them, but them greenies you put off on me were n't fit to herd lame geese. I'll be derved if I would 'a' started, Colonel, if I had n't 'a' had Charley and Nasho and Gen. Foote. And you bet picking up Palmetto Charley in the Nation was a Godsend to us. You don't catch me starting with such a lot of greeny horse-killers again. I don't mind a hand being new to the work if he's got sense and go in him, and will listen to what he is told."

"Well, Capt. Dick, you may pick your hands next time."

"Listen to that, boys! I'll hold you to that, Colonel, and won't I have the rarest lot of bull-whackers that ever came over the Trail. We'll form a company after we get through, and take to playing on the stage. We can train a little bunch of bulls on the road, though where they are goin' to get room to stampede in a house is more than I know, and the cussed fools would be sure to make right for the audience, an' I reckon that would stop the play. Reckon I don't want no theatre-playin' with bulls in mine. But I'm goin' to hold you to picking my hands, Colonel."

"We will see about that when the time comes. But about your horses. I know you think a heap of Beelzebub, and Charley does of Comanche. Had n't you better leave them here, and take a couple of ponies till you get back? You will be almost certain to have them stolen up there in the mines."

"Beelzebub will have to take the risks, Colonel, for I'm bound to ride him; I reckon I can corral him so a thief will have a lively time gettin' away with him without my knowing it, and if I happen to catch him at it, which is likely while Rover is round, I'm thinking he'll have to race with pistol bullets, and they are right hard to beat or dodge."

"Very well. I only hope you may get back with your horses all right. You will want rifles, of course. What's your choice, Capt. Dick?"

"There ain't anything better to my notion than a Winchester, particularly if the Injuns should get to huntin' us. They are sure fire, shoot where you hold 'em, and faster than anything I know of. And I hear they made an improvement on 'em last year. Made the barrel longer, the ball a little larger and a good deal heavier, more powder behind it, and the outside works of iron instead of brass. I reckon with them improvements it's a hard gun to beat."

"Well, I have got one of the new guns for you, Capt. Dick, and one of the 1873 model for Nasho, and a Springfield for Cracklins, and I'll have one for you to-morrow by the train, Charley; I have sent on to the factory for it, and got a despatch saying it would be here to-morrow. The '73 model ain't quite long enough in the barrel, and don't carry quite enough powder and ball, and the new style carries too much, and is too heavy, so I ordered one twenty-eight inches long chambered for fifty grains of powder and two hundred and fifty grains of lead, and I

think you will find it about the thing. I'm no hunter, but there's nothing like a man having a gun that suits him; and if the Indians should happen to get after you, as I hope they won't, you want the best, of course. If you are well armed and fair shots, and keep your heads, you ought to be able to take care of yourselves most anywhere. By the way, there is an Englishman in town just in from a hunt. He will most likely want to sell out his outfit, and 't will be a good chance to get what you want cheap. Better see him to-morrow, and find out. It is getting late, boys; let's turn in."

The next day we saw Col. Hunt off on the train. Before he left he handed me six hundred dollars for me and Nasho, which Mr. Illiff had given him for the cattle of his we had saved. He said Mr. Illiff told him he was very willing to get them back at half their value, for he had put them down to profit and loss, and he never expected to see them again. The last thing Col. Hunt said as the train started was, —

"Look out for your scalps, boys!"

I just thought to myself, Much obliged, Colonel, but I reckon we are rather more interested in that matter than anybody else.

We found the Englishman at the hotel, and after dinner went down with him to his camp. He showed us his guns. He had a very fine double-barrelled rifle of English make, called the Express, which he thought was the best gun in the world. The bullet is not much more than half as heavy as those of

American rifles, and has a hollow inside, so that when it hits anything it flattens out. He says this makes it sure death to game. It don't seem to me that the bullet would go in as deep as a heavy, solid bullet, and I think it would be more likely to go too high. I know it is harder to throw a light rock straight than a heavier one. Anyhow I would rather have my Winchester than his Express. He had a fine double-barrelled, breech-loading shot-gun that he said cost four hundred dollars, and enough cartridge-belts, game-bags, fishing-rods, and everything of that kind, for three or four men. He did n't seem to have killed a great deal of game, either; a few buffalo and antelope, only three elk, two black-tailed deer, and a few head of smaller game, beside prairie chickens and partridges. He had a book in which he had set down all the game he had killed, and just when and where. I reckon he would starve to death if he had to hunt for a living with a Springfield army gun.

We bought a two-horse wagon and span of mules from him, some cooking utensils and camp tricks, and a tent. He wanted us to buy his whole outfit, but Capt. Dick told him we were going to camp out, and not set up a hotel in the Hills. He had three wagons, two of them six-mule teams, and six or eight servants besides the drivers. He took a great fancy to Comanche, and wanted to buy him, but I told him he was n't for sale. He asked me if two hundred dollars would n't buy him. I told him no, nor two thousand either.

We laid in our supplies that evening, and would have been ready to start, but my gun had n't come, and I was n't willing to leave without it. You have been in the mountains, Mr. Morecamp, and know what a satisfaction it is to feel that if you have to use a gun, you have got one that you can depend on.

We struck camp near town, and made headquarters there, but next morning, after breakfast, Capt. Dick and myself went to the hotel and found a telegram for me from Col. Hunt, saying my gun would come by the next train. It was dated the day before at Kansas City.

I met Capt. Littlefield at the hotel, and, when he found out where I was going, he told me there was a man at his camp that had been in the Black Hills, and could tell me all about them. I got on Comanche, rode out to camp, and staid there several hours talking with him. He don't give any one much encouragement, but we are not like other miners, because the gold we are after has been found and dug. He says some men have made money there, but not many, and that miners are leaving the Hills every day. Says there ain't water enough, and that most of the gold is in the rock, and needs machinery to work it so as to make it pay. He says, too, the Indians are very bad; that somebody is killed almost every week, and that the stage has been robbed several times by the road agents. He says he has got enough of mining, and will take bull-driving in his every time. I reckon he did n't have much success. Maybe we will feel the

same way when we come out, but we are bound to go in and try, anyhow. I told him so, as I got on my horse to leave, and he said, —

“All right, go in lemons, and git squeezed.”

I went to the hotel and found Capt. Dick waiting for me. My gun had come, and it is just splendid. It is twenty-eight inches long, fine curled walnut stock, with hollow but, arranged for single or double triggers, heavily nickel-plated, and finished in the handsomest manner. It is central fire, calibre 45, half-octagon barrel, and weighs nine pounds. It is sighted for from one hundred to one thousand yards, has a leathern case, a strap for carrying it, reloading tools, and everything complete.

There was a note with it, saying the manufacturers didn't have time, in the short time allowed them by the order, to make such a gun as was wanted, so they sent the nearest to it they had, which they hoped would be satisfactory. And ain't it, though? It is a little heavy for me, and may kick some, but I will soon get used to it, and there is power enough in it to go through a buffalo or a grizzly at five hundred yards. Don't I want to squint through the sights at a buffalo?

When I had got through looking at it, Capt. Dick handed me another, and asked me what I thought of it. It was a Frank Wesson rifle, breech-loading, calibre 32, twenty-six inches long, single or double triggers, hunting sights, heavily nickel-plated, and finished in the best manner. I told Capt. Dick it

was just the handiest little rifle I had ever seen, and would be just the thing for shooting squirrels, rabbits, turkeys, and small game.

He said that was what it was made for, and he reckoned I was just the boy to use it. He had found it at a gunsmith's, to whom it had been sold by the man for whom it had been made. He had gotten out of money and sold it for less than half the cost. It has a case and reloading tools. I just know there is n't a boy in the country better fitted out with guns than I am. If we don't have meat in camp, it won't be the fault of the rifles.

We rode out to camp, harnessed up, made ten miles, and camped by a little hole of water. I was real glad to be on the road again, and still gladder that we did n't have any cattle to watch and sit up with.

CHAPTER XII.

A NIGHT SHOT. KILLING AN ANTELOPE. A CAMP STEW. PRAIRIE DOGS. TALK ABOUT WOLVES.

AS we were lying in the tent that night, Capt. Dick, Nasho, and me, talking about what the man from the Black Hills had told me that day, Capt. Dick pointed out through the open door-flap, and said, —

“There is a chance to try your gun, Charley.”

I didn't see anything at first, but looking farther out I caught the glint of two shining green balls about three or four inches apart. It looked like a long shot in the dark, but I raised the little Wesson to my shoulder and pulled trigger the second the sight caught. We heard the bullet crack, and the green balls went out like blowing out a light.

Capt. Dick said, —

“By George, you've put him out, Charley.”

We all went out, and found the wolf stone dead, — shot right between the eyes. Capt. Dick stepped the distance back to the tent, and made it sixty yards.

“That's a good christening, Charley. It takes a

pretty good shot to do that in the daytime, let alone at night. We won't have any music from that fellow to-night, certain. I reckon if they could hear themselves howl, they would n't be so fond of their confounded music. I believe they say in very cold countries the poor devils get so hungry in winter, they sometimes go for people. These cowardly little devils would run from a fiste. I saw one cornered once, though, and he made three good dogs stand back. By George, his teeth popped like steel traps. I did n't blame the dogs for not taking hold. They certainly must be kin to dogs, or dogs to them, they are so much alike."

"I remember thinking that very thing once up in the mountains, Capt. Dick. I was out by myself on top of a mountain, and saw a wolf come out of the thicket along the little branch at its foot. He did n't see me, and I watched him until he crossed the ridge through a little pass, and got out of sight. I thought maybe there were more where he came from, so I rode back under the hill, hitched my horse, and crawled back in shooting distance of the pass, and laid down on top of the ridge behind a bush. Presently I saw a wolf come out of the thicket, and then another, and another, until there were thirteen. There were several about two thirds grown, and they would stop and hide in the grass, and jump over each other, and frolic around just like puppies. The old ones would stop too, now and then, and lie down or squat on their haunches, like dogs. They kept com-

ing on, though, as straight toward me as they could travel, until they were in a hundred yards. They were all scattered along, the hindmost one two hundred yards behind the front one. There was an old she-wolf in the lead, and she came on again up the steep mountain-side until she was in fifteen steps of me, and laid down on a little rocky shelf. I cocked my navy six-shooter, took aim and pulled trigger, and saw her turn a somerset. I jumped up, and the others scattered and soon got out of reach. They looked pretty badly astonished. I began hunting for the one I had shot, but, though the ground was pretty open, I couldn't find her. I didn't know what to make of it. It didn't seem to me I could have missed her, she was so close, and I thought, from the way she whirled over at the shot, she must have got it. It was late, and I had to go away without finding her, but I went back the next evening, and the buzzards showed me where she was. She had not run more than a hundred yards, and must have fallen while running. I had aimed a little too far back, and shot her through the lungs instead of the heart. Next day auntie made me a mutton pie. She said anybody who killed a wolf ought always to have a mutton pie for it, because it saved the sheep. There were enough in that pack to have killed many a sheep if they had got into a flock. It's curious that if there are any goats in a flock, the wolves always kill them first. I reckon one reason is they are so much easier to tear up than a sheep. The wool is in their way."

"I reckon the strong smell of the goats draws them, too. If you were nearly starved, and were turned loose in a pantry, would n't you go for whatever hit your nose loudest?"

"Not if it was onions; but if it was cheese, I would cut a hunk, and then hunt some bread to go with it."

"Come, Charley, I'll get hungry, and have to eat another supper, if we get to talking about cheese and goodies. Let's bunk.—Cracklins, you can crawl down under the wagon. Have you got plenty of blankets?"

"Yes, Massa Dick, nuff fur to warm ice-chunk, like I seen a man doin' in Aust'n when we cummed fru dar, dribin round wid ice all wropped up in blankets, like a fool. Reckon he'd a sot water out in a snow-bank fur ter bile."

"Be sure and have your kettle on, and give us sun-up breakfast."

"Lord-a-massa, Massa Dick, I tout now we wuz off de Trail, an' did n't hab no bulls to look arter an' wait on, we would n't hab fur ter git up so airy. You'll git baldheaded 'fore your time, Massa Dick, ef you always keeps in hurry like dis."

I was up next morning by the first peep of day, and, saddling Comanche, took my little Wesson and rode off to see what I could stir up in the way of game. I did n't go but a little ways before I saw a small bunch of antelope, but they were in the open prairie, and no way to get cover on them. I went back to camp, got a red blanket, and rode out again

to where I had seen them. They were still there, feeding very quietly. I dropped my bridle reins, got down in the grass, and crawled along two or three hundred yards from them; then, spreading the blanket over me, I carefully drew myself up in a sitting position. It was n't long before one of them looked up from feeding and saw me. He snorted, and stamped his foot, turned and trotted a few steps as if he was going to run off, then stopped and looked at me again. He trotted round again in a circle, and again stopped and looked at me hard. Then he began to come toward me a few steps at a time, stopping every minute, and looking as if he did not know whether to come on or not. I sat perfectly still. The others followed him, stringing along behind. When he got in about fifty yards, he turned a little to one side, and I raised my rifle and fired at the shoulder. He gave a tremendous jump, and tumbled. The rest raised their tails, and were not long in getting away from there. I went up to the one I had shot, and found him dead. I cut his throat, to let him bleed, and then called Comanche. He raised his head, saw where I was, and started to me, holding his head to one side to keep the bridle reins from under his feet. The antelope was too heavy for me to put on to Comanche, so I cut him up into quarters, and tied them to my saddle, and rode back to camp pretty well hung round with meat. We had some antelope steak for breakfast. On the road I killed two prairie chickens and a mule-eared



much like dogs, but Capt. Dick and Nasho and I made a meal off of them, and gave Rover what was left. They are nothing but squirrels that live in the ground. I would n't mind trying a piece of wolf if I could be sure he had n't been eating any carrion lately. I often wonder what wolves live on. I know they don't often get antelope, and there ain't a great many rabbits, and it don't look like there was much of anything else for them to catch. Capt. Dick says they catch badgers and polecats and snakes and lizards, anything in the shape of flesh, but I reckon many a wolf goes to sleep on an empty stomach, and dreams about fat buffalo calves. Three of them can make as much noise as ten dogs. You would think certain, to hear them, there were fifteen. They howl mostly just after dark and before day, though I have heard them at all hours of the night, and once or twice a single one before sundown. I reckon they howl just after dark to call each other together.

One evening I was riding ahead of the wagon, and saw a wolf come out of his den in a hollow and squat down on his haunches. I started towards him, and he got up and trotted off, but did n't seem to be in a hurry. A wolf generally keeps looking back while he is running, but this fellow did n't, and I thought I would give him a race. I let Comanche strike a pretty fast gallop, and was in a hundred and fifty yards of the wolf before he saw us coming. He struck out in earnest then, but it was too late.

Comanche ran into him in a quarter, and I laid him out with a pistol-shot. Wolves are such mean, sneaking, cowardly things, I always like to kill them.

We had a real good time on the road. We was n't in a hurry about getting off so very early in the morning, and I generally got up by the first streak of light, and sometimes before, and took a hunt. Capt. Dick did n't care much about hunting. He likes to shoot game, but hates the trouble of looking for it when there is no certainty he will find any. Nasho don't care much for hunting, either. If there was no meat in camp he would be ready enough to try and kill something, and hunt just as long and faithfully as anybody, but he don't like it well enough to go much just for the sake of the hunting. There is nothing I like better than riding off by myself early in the morning, sometimes when it ain't light enough to see clearly, and everything is still and quiet, and the air is so sweet, and you feel so fresh and strong, and hope every minute to catch sight of something to shoot. How I do love stealing upon an antelope, or a bunch of them, bent almost double, and stopping as still as a rock whenever one of them looks up, and then hurrying along again while they are feeding, or crawling through the grass lying to the ground as close as you can get, moving one leg and arm at a time; and how the heart does beat and thump as you get closer and closer, and can see them so plainly you feel like they must see you! And then when you get near enough, and are

lying still watching them, and picking out the one you want, and then waiting for that one to come out by itself, how the blood seems to fly through you. And when it turns, so as to give you a good chance, and you raise your gun and run your eye over the barrel with your finger in the guard ready to touch the trigger, how your heart seems to stop, and the blood, too, and you feel like if it was to last two minutes it would kill you,—as if you would just suffocate. And when you press the trigger, and feel it give way, and hear the crack of your bullet, how you seem all afire to know whether your game is down and safe, or flying off out of reach! I often think there is many a man dying by inches in the cities, that would get well and strong if he could ride over the plains a few months, and hunt antelope and buffalo, or spend every morning stealing along through the woods with gun ready for turkey, squirrel, or deer. His eye would brighten up, and his blood run faster, and he would straighten up, and be a new man, and wonder that he could ever have been satisfied to live cooped up at a desk six days in the week.

Sometimes I think it ain't right for me to love to kill game as well as I do, but I can't help it. I don't kill just for the sake of killing. I never kill a doe that has a fawn, and hardly ever kill two deer the same day, no matter how good chances I may have, because I don't want the meat to be wasted. I like to kill an antelope and mule-eared rabbit and several

prairie chickens the same day, because they make such nice stews and soup, and we can have meat cooked different ways. There is very little of it wasted. I think Cracklins would rather eat a pound or two more than to put that little bit away, and Rover gets away with his share. It is not every day I can find game, though I don't often miss bringing in something. Sometimes in the evening, after we have struck camp, I take my bow and arrows, and go out and kill a rabbit or prairie chicken. I like to shoot with a good bow and arrows; they don't make any noise and frighten your game, and if you hit it is pretty sure to kill, but I don't like it nearly so well as shooting with a rifle, because the rifle shoots so much farther, and I am so much more certain of hitting with it. If you hold it true you are bound to hit, and if you have aimed at the right place it is nearly sure death. I never try to kill a badger, and hardly ever a polecat or a fox, but I never miss a chance at a snake or a wolf. I don't care so much for the little coyotes, but I love to pull trigger on the lobos and big gray wolves, that kill young calves and colts, and fawns, or crippled animals. And when the little Wesson cracks they are pretty sure to keel over and show their heels in the air. I have killed three hawks on the wing, but they fly so even and steadily, and slow, too, that I don't call that much test of one's shooting. It is a leap easier than killing a mule-eared rabbit, when he starts off with his tail skewed on one side, making a long

hop and then a short one, and turning first to one side and then the other. I nearly always take the bow and arrows to kill prairie-dogs. Some of my arrows are blunt, but I take steel-pointed ones without any barbs for them. Two or three times I have driven an arrow clear through one, and so deep into the ground that it held him fast. I almost hate to kill them, sometimes, but they are real good eating. Neither Capt. Dick, nor Nasho, nor I ever say "No" when Cracklins asks if we will "hab some of dis 'ere dog." He don't like to clean and cook them much, though he never complains about it. One day he said, —

"I declar', Massa Dick, it's the onaccountablest ting to me what makes you an' Mass Charley lub dis here dern dog meat so much. I don't wonder at Nasho, kase he larnt fur ter ete it whar he wur glad ter fill his belly wid anything what cum ter han'. Here's de nicest sort ub stewed anterlope, an' I laid mysef out brilin ub dat ar rabbit, he wur so fat an' tender, jis de right age, an' dis bakn, I ain't nebber been seed no better, streke o' lean streke o' fat, in ole Massip', an' you jis pass 'em all by an' lays holt on dem dern pot-bellied little dogs like dey wuz baked possum kotched out 'n simm'n tree arter frost. I don't blame dese pore Kanzis trash what lib in dugouts fur etin ub 'em, kase dey's glad enuf fur ter greze deir bellies wid mete ob any kine. Ef folks wuz ter see you an' Mass Charley a skinnin' dem dog bones, dey'd tink you nebber got no mete ter ete at home."

"So we don't, Cracklins, no such meat as this; I can get beef, and sheep, and rabbit, or even deer, most any time, but I never get any dog except when I come up the Trail, and not often then, for there ain't many that have Charley's luck in killing them. If I kill one he's sure to turn a somerset into his hole, and I don't get him then, so I'm going in for making the most of my chances. Just help my grub-pan to those hind-quarters that have browned so nice; I'm glad you don't like 'em, Cracklins, or I would n't get half enough."

"Mass Dick, jess let me gib you sum of dis antelope stew. Wid dis bakn fer sesnin hit's bettrn sheep meat."

"All right, Cracklins, I'll try a little just to oblige you, but keep those quarters hot, and don't let 'em burn, nor let either of these youngsters get 'em, either. Charley's mouth is waterin' for 'em now, an' Nasho ain't half done."

"Massa Dick, I jess knows we's goin' ter mose starbe 'fore we gits done, an' it'll be a jedgment saunt onter us kase you an' Mass Charley will keep a eatin' dese pot-bellied, squatty-tailed, stand-up-on-eend, dern dogs, when dere's plenty ob good white folks' meat in de pot. Ef I was a white young lady, Massa Dick, you should n't cum sparkin' roun' me, nor wait on me nowhar till you had n't ete no dern dog fur a whole yere, an' done promised nebber ter ete no more fur a fact."

"I am very glad you ain't, Cracklins, you'd been a

beauty, I know ; but then we would have lost a good cook, and you get these dogs up just right. Just help me to those quarters now ; they are browned to a turn."

As Cracklins was handing the plate back I reached over and took off one quarter, and Nasho slipped off the other. Capt. Dick's face had such a comical look of disappointment on it, as his plate came back empty, that we all laughed. Cracklins laid down and hollered. Capt. Dick helped himself to some bacon and rabbit, and said, as if he was in sober earnest, —

"You youngsters can't come up the Trail with me any more. When a fellow gets down to stealing dog, dead dog at that, I think its about time for him to quit."

CHAPTER XIII.

PICTURES IN CHEYENNE. A ROW AT A DANCE-HOUSE.
CAPT. DICK HAS TO CAPTURE A POLICEMAN.

WHEN we reached Julesburg, on the Union Pacific Railway, we had another talk in camp that night about our route. Our plan had been to go to Cheyenne and take the regular road from there, but we were as near Deadwood at Julesburg as we would be at Cheyenne, and it looked like throwing just that much time and distance away. There was a bad piece of country between Julesburg and the north branch of the Platte, across which there was no road, and about which all we could learn was that it was rough and broken, and water very scarce. Capt. Dick said he did n't propose to go into any such country with a wagon; that we might lose our stock, or get the wagon broken, and then we would be in a pretty fix. He said he was as ready to take risks as anybody when there was anything to be made by it, but there was n't here. If we got through all right it would take us as long as to go on by way of Cheyenne, because the country was so rough and broken. There would be a great deal more danger from the Indians, too, on the straight route. I would rather

have taken the straight road, and run the risks, because I love to travel where hardly anybody else has ever been ; but as Capt. Dick was going on my account anyhow, I did n't think I ought to ask him to take any risk that was not necessary. I proposed to him, though, to go on to Sidney, and strike for the Hills from there.

“Then we must take the cars to Sidney. I reckon I am about as fond of riding horseback as most anybody, and about as well seasoned to it as anybody, less it's a Comanche or Apache, but I ain't a goin' to crawl alongside of a railroad with a wagon, and see the cars pass me every day, goin' further in an hour than I can in two days. You are the queerest youngster about wanting to go into strange places where there's no trail, I ever saw. If we don't run into the Injuns they'll be sure to run into us before we get through, and I lack a heap of spoiling for an Injun fight — reckon I'd keep for ninety-nine years without ever seeing one — but have your way about it.”

“No, Capt. Dick, I do not want you to run any risk that ain't necessary on my account. If you think the Indians are worse on the road from Sidney, we had better go on to Cheyenne.”

“I don't know much about Injuns, Charley, only that they are mighty near certain to be where they ain't expected. I reckon they won't be looking for us on the Cheyenne road, so we'll just take that, and maybe so fool them ; and if they do run afoul of us, why, we ought to be able to take as good care of our

scalps as any of the boys. But I ain't going to brag. Reminds me of an old man I met in the mountains. Some of the boys was making fun of there being any danger from the Injuns, when the old fellow took his pipe out of his mouth, pulled off his wild-cat skin-cap, and scratched his head, as he said, —

“‘That ’s allers the way with you youngsters. Thinks you knows it all. I’ve been a fitin’ Injuns for more ’n forty years; begun when I war n’t more ’n fourteen year old, an’ bin at it ever since. I fout ’em frum the Missip’ to salt water t’ other side uv the Rockies, an’ frum Taxis to the Britishers up North; I’ve fout ’em with sogers, an’ I’ve fout ’em single-handed, an’ I’m wuss scared uv ’em now than I wuz when I begun. Jess you listen to an ole gray head, young ones; I tell you an Injun is the dangerousest animal that wars har. You kan’t never kalkilate on whar he ’s gwine ter be, but you kin jest bet to a plum ded sartinty that wherever that is he is got both eyes open, an’ up to sum deviltry, an’ that nuthin’ ain’t a comin’ his way ’thout his knowin’ it. Ef you youngsters tends to your business haf as well as the Injins does to theren, you’ll make powerful good hands, and maybe you’ll git through with them bulls. The ole man hez bin in many a skrimmage, and there’s many a red-skin hez heerd the crack uf his rifle, an’ he thinks he knows sumthin’ ’bout Injuns, but he hain’t haf as shore he won’t be rubbed out by ’em yit ez you youngsters iz.’

“And sure enough, in less than a month a Blackfoot

had the old man's scalp at his belt. That pitcher went to the well just once too often."

"All right, Capt. Dick. We'll take the Cheyenne road. I reckon there won't be much hunting on it, but there is some country I want to see. I would like very much to go to old Fort Laramie, and —"

"Not this load of poles, Charley. You'd keep agoing till you was brought up by the Pacific."

We took the cars at Julesburg, wagon, horses, and all, and went to Cheyenne. We put the wagon and horses in a wagon yard, and left Cracklins with them, and Capt. Dick and I went to town to get some things we needed, and have a look at the place. Nasho did n't want to go, and stayed with Cracklins. Cheyenne is a lively place. On one side was the depot, and the cars bringing people from all parts of the United States, and on the other were wagons, and ambulances, and stages, and horses, to take them to the plains and the mountains. Here we saw a nicely dressed man from some city, with white shirt and shining boots, and right next to him a teamster in over-shirt, rough pants in his high-topped boots red with mud and sand, broad-brimmed hat, open shirt collar, and his bull whip tied round his waist and shoulder. There would be a Chinese washerman in his blue shirt worn outside his trousers, wooden shoes, and hair plaited in a pigtail hanging down his back, lugging along a big basket of clothes; and passing him a Pawnee Indian with feathers in his hair, paint on his face, a pair of blue army pants

with the seat cut out, moccasins on his feet, and a long blanket wrapped round him. Mexican teamsters were standing by their carts leaning on their whip-stocks, and smoking cigarettes, as if it made no difference to them whether they started that evening or the next month; cow-boys were leaving town, leading horses and mules packed with provisions; miners were taking the road on foot with their clothing, blankets, and provisions in a pack on their backs, their picks and shovels on their shoulders, and their frying-pans, tin cups, and odds and ends strapped to and dangling from their waist-belts; movers to the mines or ranches in the mountains were going from store to store, while the women poked their uncombed heads out of the canvas-covered wagons, or took their snuff-sticks out of their mouths to scold the tow-headed children, who wanted to stroll through the streets. I don't think I ever saw such a motley crowd. The stores had everything that was likely to be needed, — dry goods and groceries, harness and saddles, and looking-glasses and beads, and cooking utensils, guns and pistols, ready-made clothes and skins of buffalo, bear, wolf, and deer, boots and camp-buckets, shirt-buttons and jews-harps, — everything for everybody. It seemed to me nearly every other house was a grog-shop, and drunken men could be seen everywhere. Some were talking loud, and swearing, and trying to get everybody around them to drink with them; and some were lying in the streets in a drunken sleep,

with dogs running over, and hogs rooting round and under them. Almost everybody was armed, and citizens told us hardly a day passed without somebody being killed, and sometimes three or four. We were in a store looking at some over-shirts, when a rowdy came up and tried to ride his horse into the store. The storekeeper took hold of his bridle, and backed the horse into the street, and, when the fellow started to draw his pistol, snatched up an axe-helve and knocked him off his horse. The man rose with his pistol in his hand, but when he got to the door the storekeeper had him covered with a double-barrelled shot-gun, and he turned round, got on his horse, and rode off. We learned that night that he came back in the evening with a friend, and raised a row, in which a passing citizen was severely wounded by a stray ball.

The Indians interested me more than anybody else. They were Pawnees, employed as scouts by the United States government. Most of them wore army pants, hunting-shirts of calico or buckskin, and moccasins. They were engaged in scouting through the country between Cheyenne and the Black Hills, to try and keep the Sioux away. Some of them did not look like they were worth much as soldiers, but Capt. Dick says they are first-rate scouts, and fight well. The Pawnees used to be one of the worst tribes on the plains, — stealing horses, and robbing and killing emigrants on all sides. They stole from and fought the other Indian tribes just as they did the

whites; but they got so badly used up in a fight with the Sioux, they had to surrender entirely to the government, and move to the Indian Territory. Thinking it would be a good plan to fight Indians with Indians, the government enlisted a company of them as scouts, and they did good service. They were well armed, and Capt. Dick said the Sioux were more afraid of them than of white troops. They were in Cheyenne just now getting supplies. I tried to talk to one of them, but he pretended he could not understand or talk English. He knew enough, though, to beg me for some tobacco. I offered to trade him tobacco for his pipe; it was made of red sandstone, and had a handle three feet long, ornamented with fringes of buckskin, bands of plaited horsehair dyed bright colors, rows of beads and feathers. He didn't want to give up his pipe, but the tobacco was too tempting for him, and at last I got it. I bought a pair of beaded moccasins from another. They were new, and right prettily braided with the fancy-colored beads. Another one had a bridle made of horsehair, with long, trailing rein of dressed buffalo skin, which I wanted. I took him to a store, showed him some bridles, and offered him any one of them for his. He turned away from them, and went to another one rigged out with red and yellow leather tassels and rosettes, and big, bright buckles, and made signs to me that he would give me his for that one. I made him throw in his quirt. Nasho could make me a much prettier

one, but I wanted it, because it was Indian, to put with my Indian collection.

After supper Capt. Dick went up town. The rest of us stayed at the wagon in the wagon-yard. Directly Cracklins went off up town, too. I left our wagon and went to another close by, and we got to talking about the road and the Indians. I had just gone back to our wagon to go to bed, when Cracklins came in as hard as he could run, and said Capt. Dick was killed up town at a dance. I told Nasho to stay at the wagon to keep anybody from stealing our things and horses, and, taking Cracklins with me, started up town on a run. Cracklins said he had followed Capt. Dick to a house where they sold liquors and had music and dancing, and was watching the dance, when two or three men began to swear, the lights were blown out, shooting began, and he got out as quick as he could. He waited a few minutes for Capt. Dick to come out, but he did n't see him, and supposed he had been hurt, and ran to camp to tell me.

When we got to the house the lights had been lit, and I ran in. I passed a corpse on the floor, and two men carrying off another who was all bloody. A woman, who I knew by her dress was a dancing-girl, was lying on a bench. Her clothes were bloody, and a doctor was examining her, while other women stood around crying and mourning. I saw these things while I was running to the other end of the house. There was a man lying there, and I knew

by the hat it was Capt. Dick. His left arm was a little bloody, but it was not broken, and I could n't find any mark of his being hurt anywhere else. I told Cracklins to bring me some water, and he snatched up a water-cooler and came with it. I caught some in my hat, and threw it in Capt. Dick's face. He gasped, and opened his eyes. Was n't I glad! I knew from his look he was not dangerously hurt. I caught more water, and bathed his face, and in a minute he raised up.

"Come, Charley, we must get out of here. The police will be here directly, and we'll have trouble. I'm all right now."

We helped him to his feet, and started for the door, but just as we got to it a squad of policemen came up. They laid hold of Capt. Dick and Cracklins, but I slipped out of the way to one side. The rest went into the house, leaving one to guard them. I began to tell him that we did n't have anything to do with the row, but he told me to shut up; he had heard that tale before. I began again, but he raised his club and ordered me to shut up.

"We'll take you in, too. You've got a pistol on, and came out of the row. Good for ninety days, all of you." Capt. Dick jerked himself loose, and before the fellow knew what he was doing, drew his pistol, and covered him.

"Just come with us, Mr. Police, and don't open your mouth, or I'll have to feed you on lead. Be quiet, and you won't be hurt. Just lay your hand

on that ducky as if you were taking him to the calaboose, and I'll go along like I was helping you. Remember, though, not a word out of you. Watch him, Charley, but don't shoot if he behaves."

We started to the wagon on a quick walk. Several policemen passed us once, but I reckon they thought we were taking Cracklins to the calaboose, as they did n't stop us, and we hurried on. When we got to the yard, Capt. Dick said, —

"Just let go of the ducky now, and walk along as if everything was all right."

We went to our wagon, and Capt. Dick said, —

"Sorry we have n't got chairs, but there's plenty of room. Get a stool, Cracklins, for this officer."

We sat down on anything that came handy. Two men from another camp came up.

"Look here, partners, we've got a little private business to settle here, but if you'll just remember that it is our business, and don't concern anybody else, we'll be glad to have you on hand."

"All right, Cap'n; did n't know there was anything private up, but we know better than to shoot off our mouths 'bout other folks' business, and as we are here, if it's all the same, we'll just stay and hear the news."

"Well, Mr. Officer, you laid hold of the wrong man when you pitched on to me. You see I went into that fandango to see what was going on, and I met there a pretty Mexican woman that I had known before. She had nursed me once when I was sick,

and a mighty good nurse she was, too. It runs in the breed to find roots, and make teas, and spread poultices, and all them things that help to bring sick folks straight again. We had to have a dance, of course, and then a glass of wine, and another dance and drink. She's a nice woman, Señora Monclora is; none of your dirty greasers. I was just going to say 'Good by,' and strike out for camp, when she proposed one more dance, saying we might never have another one, as she was going with her husband to Mexico. Of course I led her out, and we were spinning around when out went the lights, and I just remember getting a tremendous lick on the head, and the next thing I knew this youngster, who had n't been with me at all, was stooping over me washing my face. If you'll take a peep at this fellow, you'll see every room is full, and that's the only weapon I have on, so it stands to reason I did n't take any share in the row."

The officer examined the pistol Capt. Dick handed him carefully, and returned it to him.

"Now I did n't mean any disrespect to you as an officer in walking you off in this way, but you see there was n't anything else to be done. Nothing would have satisfied you but marching me off to the calaboose without waiting to hear my story, and that's a hotel where I have never put up, and don't intend to. I would n't mind going into court if I had a fair chance, but they are mighty uncertain, and in cases of this sort a little more apt to get the

wrong man than the right one. I'd be willing to be fined a twenty for being found in such a place, but I can't be sure that's the way the judge would put it up, and I can't afford to take any risks. So I propose to you as a man just to let this thing drop right here. We are going to leave in the morning. Ain't that the fair thing, men?"

"Fairer than anything you're likely to git in any Cheyenne court. It's plum certain that shootin'-iron ain't talked nary time to-night, fur its mouth is as dry as a teamster's on the road, an' that young one was in our camp half an hour ago, and did n't have no hand in the row."

"I have n't any doubt about your not being in the row, Cap'n, but that was n't any way to treat an officer. It would be a nice thing for me, would n't it, to get out that I had been captured by a prisoner, and marched off to his camp, and made to turn him loose?"

"There was three to one officer; no man need be ashamed of giving in to those odds, particularly as I had a pistol handy, and yours was stuck in your belt. As to its gettin' out on you, I'll answer for this youngster and the darky keeping their mouths shut, and these gentlemen here are pledged to keep quiet. Was n't that the understanding, men?"

"Lay low, and keep mum, partner. That was the 'greement, and we stands to it."

"I don't say you have got to turn me loose, Mr. Officer, but I ask you, as the fair thing in this busi-

ness, to do it. It may not be law, but it will be justice. You say you don't believe I had any hand in the row; ought I to be arrested, and maybe ordered to the calaboose, for what I did n't do? I'm not going to the lockup for the judge or any other man, but I'm willing to stand a reasonable fine. Just tell me where to put a ten, and I'll hand it out. I had n't no business in such a place, and am willing to pay for being there."

"I reckon you're right, Cap'n, and I'll drop this thing right here, on the understanding that you and your crowd keep quiet. If you want to put a ten in the right place, one of our boys was killed last week while he was trying to arrest a rowdy, and his wife and two little ones are having a hard enough time of it to keep meat in the pot."

"Here's your ten. I'll get you to give it to her for me. Of course you won't say anything about how you happened to get it. And now, as this crowd ain't likely to get together again, I move we adjourn for a drink and cigars.

They all went off together, and directly Capt. Dick and the two campers came back alone. They stopped a minute at our wagon, and one of them asked, —

"Well, pard, if that clubtoter had n't 'a' wanted to let ye go — reckon he did n't have much of a underholt on you — what would you have done?"

"Hitched up, took him with us six or eight miles, hobbled him hand and foot, and left him off the road."

"That's the way to put it up, Cap'n. Good night."

“ And I ’d been sure, Charley, to have taken him the road we ain’t a going to travel to-morrow. But it is best like it is, and if ever I get caught in one of them houses again, I hope something a heap worse will happen to me.”

I tried to get him to go to a doctor and have his head examined, but he wouldn’t. He said he had soldiered enough to know that all his arm wanted was plenty of cold water, and that his head was all right ; his hat was so thick that it had broken the force of the blow. So after giving his arm and head a good wash, and rubbing them well with liniment, we turned in and went to sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

A QUEER SPECULATION. CAPT. DICK DON'T LIKE IT, BUT FINALLY AGREES. "TWO WAGON-LOADS OF MUSIC WRAPPED UP IN CAT-FUR."

"CAPT. DICK," said I, next morning, at breakfast, "I am going to try a speculation, if you'll wait on me a few days."

"What is it, Charley ; going to take a load of cats to the Hills?"

"How came you to guess it the first thing?"

"You don't mean it in earnest!"

"Yes I do, Capt. Dick."

Capt. Dick stretched himself back and laughed heartily.

"That's a good one, Charley. I never know what I may get into ; but I had n't the least idea, when I left Texas, of going to the mines with a menagerie. Won't we have music by the band at night!"

"You may laugh as much as you please, Capt. Dick, but I'm in sober earnest about it."

"What do you suppose miners want with cats?"

"For pets, and to keep rats and mice out of their tents."

"I think I see us rolling into Deadwood with a wagon-load of yowlers, half of 'em squealing like mad, and the other half fighting. Won't we raise the town, though! I'll bet there hasn't been any sort of a show there that will draw a crowd like our menagerie. You may bet your bottom dollar, Charley, I ain't a going to be auctioneer for that crowd. Won't you get some gay chin music, though?"

"I'll do the selling, Capt. Dick, and stand all the chaffing, too. I am not at all afraid that I'll have any trouble about getting rid of them, but I expect your plan of selling them at auction is the best one."

"Don't mix me up with your foolishness, Charley. I am going back to Texas, and I don't want to have my life devilled out of me when I get there about any derved foolishness with cats. If it was anybody else, I'd leave the outfit. Of course I'm going to stand by you, and you can take a load of polecats if you want to, but just remember, it's none of my lay out."

"Capt. Dick, you know I hate to do anything you don't like, but I'll tell you there's money in this thing, and we had just as well have it as anybody else."

"Go ahead, Charley. I'll stand by you, but no Thomas-cat spondulicks in mine. Just let me ask you how you are going to get your cats, to begin with?"

"That is the hardest part of the job, though I don't think we will have a great deal of trouble

with it. The 'Cheyenne Leader' comes out to-morrow. I am going to put an advertisement in it for cats. I am going to have some handbills struck, and send a darky with a red flag and bell to hand them out, and let all the boys in town know where they can sell their cats. The farmers and country people will be in town to-morrow; and I'll get at them that way; and if that don't bring them, Nasho and I will have to go round and hunt them up."

"Oh, you'll get 'em. You needn't be scared about that. Derved if I ain't a good notion to camp in the jail while your cats are coming in. How many do you want, anyhow?"

"Five hundred."

"Je-ru-sa-lem! Look here, Charley, how do you suppose anybody's going to stand the meowing, and yowling, and spitting, and screeching, and raising Cain generally, of five hundred derved cats? That's too thick!"

"Feed them plenty, and they will be quiet enough."

"Oh, yes; they'll be quiet. Ain't going to have any but nice, gentlemanly Thomas-cats, and gentle, lady-like Tabbies, that will wash their faces every morning, and go to sleep whenever you ask 'em. They'll be quiet, of course; as quiet as forty dozen Kaiotes of a moonlight night, after killing a beef in camp. Holy Moses, what a row they'll make at meal-times! Going to take a drove of beeves along to feed 'em with? Or is it your notion to have two or three pensful of milch cows for 'em? Maybe you can

buy up two or three thousand cheeses in Cheyenne, and give 'em cheese on toast and iced milk every morning."

"I'll take three or four beeves with me, a few sides of bacon, and two or three barrels of meal."

How Capt. Dick did laugh!

"I've seen acres of feeding-sheds for cows, and rods upon rods of lunch-counters for hogs, and horse restaurants, and four-story chicken and turkey houses, and I've heard of hatching-yards for wolves, but dern my skin if ever I expected to see a travelling cat hotel, much less to travel with it as one of the outfit. Won't Cracklins have a gay old time cooking for 'em! Maybe if you will look round close, Charley, you'll find some sort of a machine that'll feed 'em. How are you going to carry 'em? charter a line of coaches? You'll have to have 'em partitioned off into rooms, and carpeted, and the walls lined with velvet, to keep 'em from getting bumped in travelling."

"I am going to take two four-mule freight wagons, have a light, strong frame made in tiers two deep and five high, leaving an open space through the centre, and have these tiers divided again by cross-pieces, so as to make little cells about a foot long and five inches broad. The partitions will be made of slats, so there will be light and air, and I'll have soft hay in each cell, and, except that they will be in pretty close quarters, they'll do well enough."

"How are you going to water them?"

"Have a tin cup in each cell, and watering-pots with long nozzles, to pour the water into them. For feeding, I'll get a lot of these thin wooden pie-plates to put their mush in."

"How are you going to get at the inside tiers?"

"By the space left in the middle. I'm going to have each freighter bring somebody with him to feed them and cook for them. I'll have two or three big skillets to cook the meal in, and feed them twice a day."

"Well, Charley, you've worked the thing to a pretty fine point, and I hope it will pan out all right, but it's the queerest outfit ever I heard of, and looks to me like the foolishhest. Why should miners care any more for cats than bullwhackers? I reckon you never have seen a bullwhacker carrying a cat about with him, have you?"

"A bullwhacker has no time for anything but eating and sleeping, but a miner has. When he comes to camp at night he wants something for company, and cats are good to keep the rats and mice from taking his camp. I have seen movers have them often, and hunters two or three times where they had wagons and a regular outfit."

"What put it into your head to go into this cat speculation?"

"I was thinking, the day before we got here, about what I had read of the California mines, and remembered that several good speculations had been made there with them. If they wanted them there they

will in the Hills, and it won't cost half as much to get them here as it did there, because they had to be brought from the States by sea then."

"What do you expect to pay for them?"

"From a quarter to a dollar apiece. I won't take any but good-looking ones, and the better they look the more I'm willing to pay for them."

"And what do you expect to get for them?"

"Five dollars for at least half of them, and not less than two and half for the rest. For the finest looking ones I will ask fancy prices."

"What will it cost you to lay them down there?"

"About fifty cents, I think, but for certainty I am making my calculations at a dollar a head. That leaves me a wide margin for profit and loss. If I lose the whole outfit I'll be about flat, but if I make a good profit, as I feel certain of doing, I'll clear from one to two thousand dollars."

"Derned if I don't believe you are right, Charley. You have got margin enough at your figures, and if the miners buy 'em at all, I reckon they won't be very particular about the price they pay. I would n't be at all surprised if they don't gobble 'em up like hot cakes. How are you going to manage about receiving 'em here?"

"I am going to have the frame made at once, here at camp. It will be in sections. The first section will be put on the wagon body, and, as soon as it is full, the second will be placed over it, each section being made fast as it is put in place. When all are in, the wagon will be loaded ready for the trip."

“How about their grub?”

“I will have the meal put up in sacks, and stowed away with the bacon in the front of the wagons.”

“What do you want of the bacon?”

“To cook with the meal. They will eat it much more freely that way, and look better when they get there.”

“I see you have figured it out from A to izard, and I hope it will pan out big. But suppose somebody happens to have been ahead of you?”

“I have been inquiring about that in an easy way, and I can't hear of any cats in the mines. I reckon mine will be first.”

“Well, if I can help you in any way just sing out, and I'll answer.”

“If you think it is a safe thing I would like to have you go in with me, Capt. Dick. I intended to have proposed it to you before, if you had not made so much fun of it. I thought you were almost angry about it.”

“I have n't commenced having fun out of it yet. I did think, at first, it was about the biggest piece of foolishness I ever heard of from a sensible man. By George! there's one good thing about it. If the Injuns let fly into our camp some night, and hit two or three of them cats, they'll think the devil's broke loose in Georgia when they begin to yowl. Won't they get away from there, though, fast! Bad medicine, heap. Ugh! You ought to have a patent on your Injun scarer, Charley.”

"You are welcome to all the fun you can get out of it, Capt. Dick. I have calculated on being joked not a little on this investment, but I think I will get paid for the jokes. What do you say to going in with me?"

"No, Charley. It's your idea, and if there is any money comes out of it, you ought to have it. I will help you all I can, just the same as if I was in it myself."

"Capt. Dick, you came on this trip for me. Now if you think it is safe, I will be glad to have you go in with me, but I am not willing to have you lose anything at it."

"That ain't my style, Charley. If it's safe enough for you, it is for me; but if I go in, I go in to lose as well as to make. It's your say."

"Partners it is then, even Stephen."

"I don't want to throw off on you, old fellow, but you'll have to make the arrangements for gathering in this herd yourself. I ain't much force when it comes to rounding up printers, and branding handbills. I'll be on hand, though, when it comes to receiving the stock and shipping 'em. Would n't I like to see 'em all unloaded in one corral! I reckon that's something nobody has ever seen yet; five hundred cats in one herd. Make a lively stampede they would, and climbing trees to get out of the way would n't do a fellow much good, either. Jerusalem, would n't I hate for about a dozen of 'em to take me for a post-oak, and begin clawing up me. Reckon

you 'll have to count me out, if this herd makes a break."

"I 'll go to town, tell a carpenter what I want, and send him out with the lumber, if you will be here and set him to work when he comes. Then I 'll go to work about getting our stock in. I 'll leave picking up a couple of wagons, and making the best terms you can with them for the trip, to you. I think we ought to be on the road Tuesday evening."

"All right, Charley, I 'll 'tend to the transportation, and the sooner we are on the road the better."

After making my arrangements, I strolled round town to see and hear anything that might be of advantage to us. The sign of the Wyoming Armory caught my eye, and I walked in. Shot-guns and rifles of every make, — Winchester, Sharps, Evans, Ballard, Remington, Whitney, and others filled cases on the sides ; pistols of all kinds, cartridges, powder-flasks, shot-pouches, field-glasses, compasses, — everything that a hunter could want was there. Fine chromos lined the walls between the cases, — among them The Last Shot, which represents, I was told, Jos. L. Meek, a noted trapper of Montana, rubbing out an Indian, who was after his scalp. There was an elk's head, with ten prongs, stuffed otters, foxes of several kinds, deer, black and white tailed, and roebuck from Europe, coyote, stone-marten, mink, and other animals, and grouse, sage-hen, and ducks. It was the finest and most complete gun store I ever saw. Jules Ecoffey, a trapper, hunter, and trader,

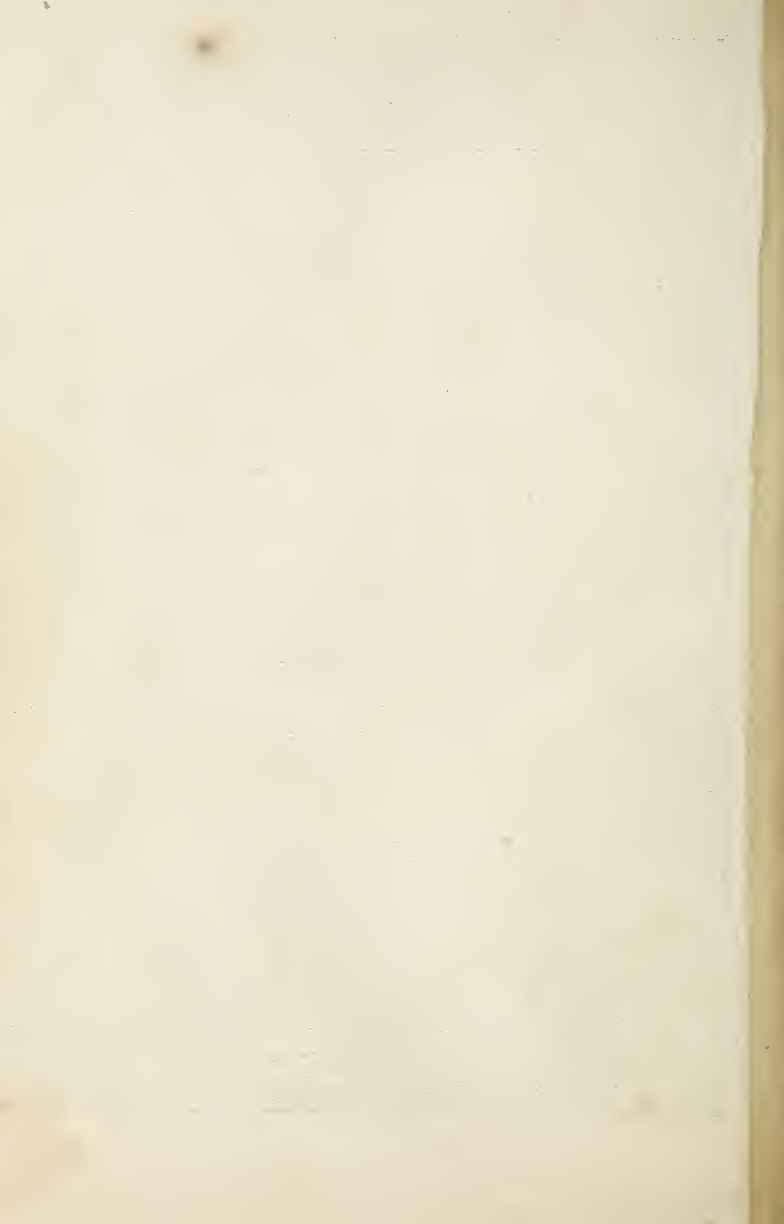
long before there were any settlements in this part of the country, was pointed out to me. Wild Bill was in town, a handsome, dare-devil looking man, noted, for a time, as one of the most dangerous men on the frontier, though he claims never to have killed a man except in self-defence. East of the Missouri he is known as Mr. Hickock. Texas Jack was there, too. He had just come in from the Yellowstone country, where he had been as guide to a party of Englishmen. He says they found any quantity of game—elk by the hundreds—and that there will be good hunting there for years. And I saw Mr. Dexter and his team, four milk-white oxen hitched one in front of the other, trotting around with heads and tails up, like stylish horses. Their driver says there is not one of them that cannot make a mile in harness in three minutes and forty-seven seconds, and will bet largely that he will load up forty-five hundred pounds, and beat any four-horse or mule team to Deadwood. California Bill, the man whom the Indians took at Red Canon last year, and branded, was on the street. Pretty rough lines that, but better than the rest of his party found, for neither hot coals nor pelting hail will ever trouble them in their lonely graves. I heard, too, a horrible story about a Black Hills miner, named Kepper, whose skeleton was found picked almost clean by the prairie wolves, and it is feared that, sick and exhausted, he must have fallen, and been attacked by them when too faint to defend himself. Of all the horrible deaths of

the prairie, this must be one of the worst. Calamity Jane has just come in from the Hills. Of all the sad sights I have ever seen, a drunken woman is one of the saddest. I had hoped to have seen some of the noted scouts of the border, — Louis Richard, Thomas Cosgrove, the white chief of the Shoshonees, Frank Guard, Rocky Mountain Jim Baker, California Joe, and perhaps Curly, the Crow, — but nearly all of them are with Gens. Crook, and Terry, and Miles, on the hunt for Sitting Bull. Cheyenne is a great place for the noted men of the plains and the mountains.

Well, the cats began to come in Monday, and a lively time we had of it, receiving them and getting them stowed away in their cells. Cats of all sorts, colors, and sizes, some sleek and fat as house pets, and others that had evidently had to scratch for a living, and found it hard work and poor rations. Vicious as wild-cats, some of them, but I would n't take any of them, nor of the poor, scrawny ones. There were going to be plenty of them, so I could pick and choose. They cost me about sixty cents, on an average. I bought half a dozen very pretty tortoise-shells, for which I had to pay from two to three dollars apiece. One Maltese, the only one I could get, cost me five dollars. I put the Maltese and the tortoise-shells in our wagon, where they would have more room. If I could have got an Angola cat, I would have had a pretty good collection. They did n't squall and mew as much as I expected they would, but they made noise enough to keep camp



STOWING AWAY THE CATS. Page 182.



full of visitors all the time. A great many tried to get off old jokes on us, and make fun at our expense, but I think most of them got as good as they gave.

"Do you think really, stranger," one of those finicky, walking-cane, part-his-hair-in-the-middle clerks asked Capt. Dick, "you are going to find fools enough in the mines to buy your felines?"

"That's my business, Fly-up-the-Creek," answered Capt. Dick, shortly; "but here is something concerns you. The fool-killer will be along here in a week. Keep your ears open and your eye skinned, and when you catch a glint of him hunt your hole, or you'll be the first one to go up."

We all got scratched and clawed more or less at first, but we soon learned how to handle them. We put on heavy buckskin gloves, and if one seemed at all vicious, a grip on the back of the neck would straighten it out so it could easily be handled. I would a heap rather manage bulls, though. Handling these cats reminded me of seeing a couple of cow-drivers driving a badger to camp once. It looked like rather small business for two men and horses. I did n't have any liking for our job, but it was an honest speculation, and I felt certain the laugh would come in on the other side before we were through.

By noon, on Tuesday, we were loaded up, "full from cellar to garret," as one fellow said.

"I've seen some queer sights in my time," said

another, "but dern my buttons if ever I seen two wagon-loads of music wrapped up in cat-fur before."

"Won't there be a catastrophe, though, when them wagons upset?" put in a third.

"And such a caterwauling as has n't been heard since Samson turned loose them two hundred thousand foxes with firebrands to their tails."

"It ain't any of my put, gentlemen," said a long, lank freighter, "but ef you'll turn tail with them wagins, an' git you a tent, and set up a show through the States, derned if you don't make a sight more money with 'em than you'll git for 'em in the mines. Might say they wuz Injun cats, kotched up on the Yellowstone, to give 'em a sort of fur-off air."

I believe the fellow was right. Capt. Dick said if we were to spread a tent, and charge a quarter a head, we could take in two hundred and fifty dollars right there in Cheyenne, and I reckon we could.

The teams stood hitched while we ate dinner, and when that was over we pulled out for the Hills with our "wagon-loads of music wrapped up in cat-fur."

CHAPTER XV.

SCENERY ON THE ROUTE. CHIMNEY ROCK. OLD
FORT LARAMIE. THE ENGLISH FLAG AND THE
ENGLISHMAN UNDER IT. FELLOW-TRAVELLERS.
LONELY GRAVES.

EIGHTEEN miles brought us to Pole Creek, with just light enough to camp by. The ranch-keeper, Mr. Schwartz, heard of our queer freight, and came down for a look.

"Well, youngster," he said to me when he had satisfied his curiosity, "I've always been used to pay to see shows ; you comes to my ranch, I gifs you some milk."

I went, of course. Capt. Dick said our cats were beginning to pay already — milk for supper and breakfast. We had to rout out early in the morning to get them fed ; but before the sun rose all was over, and we rolling again. Our principal driver, Mr. Cheervix, was an old Missouri freighter, who had been wagoning on the plains for twenty years. He was more careful and trustworthy than many of his class, and seemed particularly anxious to prevent any accident. "I reckon I've pulled," said the old man,

as he sat by the fire that night with his hands crossed over his knees enjoying his stubby pipe, "a'most everything that ever gits on wheels. I've had a whole little store on my wagon at onst. I've cussed powerful over a biler in Platte quicksands, and hauled ore when five miles was a good day's pull, that no greenhorn could make. I've throwed off freight to make room for sogers full of Injin arrows, an' I've run like mad with officers' wives and children, skeart nighly to death lest the Injins they was runnin' frum shud ketch 'em afore they could make Lev'nworth. Help pull a menag'rie thar onst, an' thort that wus queer work, but may I be etarnily swunked to Mexikin saho, ef I ever calkilated to be kitched hauling two whole loads of cats. I've seed bullwhackers that could n't be got to put ary one uf yer cats over their wheels fur no money, but that ain't me. I rolls fur money, and cat money iz es good to me ez flour money, ur bakin' money, ur whiskey money. Hit'll buy jest ez much grub, and kivering, and baccy. You may jest bet yer life I'm gwine to land yer cats in Deadwood with the fur outside; an' Jim," turning to his son, who drove the second wagon, "ef you hez ary upset this load uf poles, back you goes to Mas-sourie and the plow han'les, an' I'll see ef thar's the makin' uf a bullwhacker in little Pap Price."

"I reckon I'll be 'long when you rolls in dad, an' nary a cat's tail mashed nuther."

I was glad we had careful drivers, because I wanted to see as much of the country as possible, and of

course could n't do it if I had to be tied to the train watching for an upset all the time. There was little to be seen except rolling prairie, with the blue-topped Laramie mountains away on the left, until some long hillsides took us down into the valley of the Chugwater. The scenery here was beautiful. The pretty little Chugwater bordered with thin lines of cottonwood and ash, filled up between with hedges of plum and cherry and willow and alder bushes, wound through a smooth valley covered with rich grass and bright flowers. The bluffs that walled it in were of light, brittle sandstone, that had been cut by wind and sun and rain into all kinds of singular shapes. The ranches of the settlers, the camp-fires of the freighters and miners, and the little bunches of cattle and horses scattered about through the valley, gave it a very different appearance from that which it must have had to the hunters and trappers who used to hide their camp-fires in its thickets from the watchful eyes of the Indians, who held this country as all their own, or the gold-seekers of 1849, making a long caravan from Council Bluffs on the Missouri, to the gold-filled sands of California rivers. Chimney Rock has lost a third of its height since the first white hunter camped at its base, but from that day to this it has been the appointed meeting-place for the men of rifle and trap, and the lofty guide and mile-post to the tired overland traveller, saddle-sore with week after week journeying over this ocean of grass, and worn and wasted with nights of watching for the

dreaded form of the Indian rover, and listening for the dreaded hist of the Indian arrow. I am not sorry the country is settling up, and the Indian forced to clear the way for the axe and plough of the white man, but I am glad there is still country where one may ride for days and never hear the thud of the settler's axe, or the fall of the forest tree; where the only animal life that meets the eye is that of Nature's pastures; where the leaves of the pine, or the sod of the prairie, furnish the only bed, and the lordly elk, the rock-loving bighorn, or the watchful deer is the only food of him whose keen sight and trusty rifle must prove his watch and ward in the solitary fastnesses of the snow-peaked Rockies.

The fourth day took us to old Fort Laramie. How much I had read about it, how often I had wished to see it! Yet, now I was here, there was very little to see. A little stream worn here and there into grass-lined pools, a hillside gently sloping westward, upon whose crest stood a line of long, low buildings, shutting out the view of the far-distant mountains beyond. Wagons drawn up in front, their teams at rest while their masters are lounging through the hall of the trading-post, or buying from its well-filled shelves, horsemen on galloping steeds or leading laden mules going or coming, little knots of miners, freighters, and ranchmen in earnest conversation, lying-by campers in the valley below, and one heavily loaded footman tramping on his weary way to the Hills. Not much to be sure, but as I drew

rein and looked upon the scene I thought of the long history of the frontier, those weather-beaten walls could tell, if they could but find tongues to reveal the conversations they had heard, and the wild scenes that had been enacted without, about, and around them. McKenzie, the Sublettes, Bridger, Campbell, Fontenelle, Sinclair, — what a host of trappers, free, skin, and hired, have eaten and drank, danced and caroused, vaunted and fought, within the solitary post where beaver-skins held undisputed sway for many years. How often their long lines have defiled before its walls as they passed by from St. Louis with goods and traps, or came wearily trooping back laden with furs from the wild wilderness, where more than one of the careless outgoers had sunk beneath the Indian arrow or tomahawk, and would return no more! Indians! not a tribe within hundreds of miles that has not been represented here in feast or foray. What an army of them there would be, could they all be gathered around the old walls! Perhaps if they had been united and fallen mercilessly on the first white men who invaded their broad, buffalo-stocked, beaver-lined country, they might not now be hanging around his posts, eating his flour and bacon instead of the rich game of Nature's own providing, or wearing the white man's uniform, and following under the white man's banner in chase and fight of Sioux and Cheyenne and Blackfeet, who still refuse to abandon this noble land to which the Great Spirit had led their fathers, and

which is made sacred to them by the bones of their bravest warriors. The fur-trapper has given place to the soldier; the miner pitches his tent where once stood the wickey-up of the Indian; the cattle of the stock-raiser are eating the pasturage of the buffalo; the farmer follows fast with axe and plough, and the Indian must yield the long-cherished hunting-grounds of his fathers. Westward he cannot go; the white man is there before him. What would we say of the white man who would not fight for country and home; shall we blame the Indian for doing the same?

There is travel enough on this road to the mines. Now we pass a train of freight wagons heavily loaded with goods of all kinds for Deadwood and Crook, and other towns of the Hills. Every teamster has a revolver in his belt, and a breech-loading rifle peeps out of the corner of nearly every wagon, or lies handy to the reach in the feed-box.

"Bound for the mines?" Capt. Dick asked of one as we rode by.

"You bet!"

"Pretty heavily loaded, ain't you?"

"Nigh on to fifty hundred, but we'll git through if the Injins let us alone."

"Good luck to you."

"Same to you, Cap'n. Reck'n you won't git catch'd on them hosses, but keep your eye skinned."

Next we passed two men on horseback, one of them leading a pack mule. What with their blan-

kets and clothes and provisions and tools and camp tricks, that mule was finding Jordan a heavy road to travel, to say nothing of stabling himself under a pine-tree, and hunting for his rations when he ought to have been asleep. The next traveller was a Jew pedler on foot, with a big pack that bent him nearly double. He didn't seem to have any weapons, and Capt. Dick asked him if he wasn't afraid of Indians.

"Eferbody dalks to me 'bout Injins, Injins, Injins; I ton't hear nut'n' but Injins. Dey tinks I ton't got no peestol, but dey don't see inside mine pocket!"

And he put down his pack, and pulled out a little seven-chambered, pea-shooting revolver, that a frontiersman or an Indian would laugh at.

"He ain't so pig as some peestols, but he is a pully fur shootin'. I ton't pees 'fraid of no Injins while I pin got him."

And he flourished it around as if he was a match for the whole Sioux tribe.

"The chuckle-headed fool!" said Capt. Dick. "He has n't the least idea that that popgun would n't go through an Injun's hide. I'd a heap rather have a rock. Yet I'd bet Beelzebub against a sheep that that dry-goods store on his back gets through all straight."

A mile farther on we came up with an outfit that did n't look like it belonged on the plains. There was a two-horse wagon carrying a tent, all kinds of camp tricks, provisions and oats, and an ambulance

drawn by two mules. The driver was dressed in corduroy pants, a red jacket, boots, and a soldier cap. The curtains were up, and on the seats, put together so as to make a bed, lay a man reading. He had on pants that seemed to be made of some kind of tanned skin, a green jacket full of pockets, a pair of boots with turned-down tops, a silk handkerchief around his neck, and wore spectacles. Two guns were strapped to the sides of the ambulance, and one hung from the top; cartridge belts lay on the seat, and sporting tools of various kinds were scattered about. Two fine pointers were fastened to the coupling pole of the ambulance, and a couple of greyhounds to the wagon. A flag, whose staff was fastened to the front bow of the wagon, flapped out in the wind, and showed its bright colors. It was not the United States flag, and the men did not look like Americans.

"Look here, Captain," said Capt. Dick, riding up alongside of the ambulance, "I don't want to be meddlesome, but I would like to know what you carry that flag for."

"That 's the Henglish flag!"

"I knew it, was n't the stars and stripes; but what do you carry it for?"

"To show that Hi'm han Henglishman!"

"What good will that do?"

"Why, Hi've been told there were savages hin these parts, han' that they sometimes murder travellers, han' Hi want them to know Hi'm han Henglishman."

"And you think they won't trouble you if they see that flag?"

"Hof course they won't. Hi shall keep that flag always flying hover my camp, and Hi shall wear a small one hin my cap, hand Hi shall be as safe hin the woods as Hi should be hin Lunnun!"

"How do you think the Injuns will know that is the English flag?"

"As hif there's a foot hof ground hin the world where the flag hof hold Hengland was n't known and respected."

"But how about at night. They can't see the color of the flag then, and won't know what flag it is!"

"That's their lookout. Hif they fire hon the Henglish flag they will have to take the consequences. Hit's their place to know who they are a shootin' at h afore they shoot."

"Suppose they do fire into you, what will you do?"

"Why, hafter Hi whip them hoff, Hi shall sit down hand write a full account hof the houtrage to Sir Edward Thornton, hand the Hamerican government will be called to haccount for it quick henough. The Hindians will have to hapologize, and pay for hany damage they may do. Hold Hengland never allows hany trifling with her flag by no blawsted foreigners."

"But suppose the United States can't get hold of the Injins to make them apologize and pay damages?"

"Why then she must do hit herself. Hengland will make her responsible for the hacts that are done on her soil."

"But if the United States won't be responsible for the acts of wild Injins?"

"Then Hengland will go to war, hand make her."

"Good morning, and good luck to you."

"Charley," said Capt. Dick to me, as we rode out of hearing, "I 've seen some fine specimens of fools since I 've been coming the Trail, but that dern'd Englishman leads 'em all by a mile. The idea of a man going into the Injin country with a flag flyin' to let 'em know where he is, and expectin' the Injins won't shoot into him because he's got the English flag over his head, is the biggest piece of foolishness I 've seen since the woods were burnt. I wonder if the dern'd fool does think England would make war on the United States if the Injins were to fire on him. I hate to see a man going straight to his death with his eyes blindfold, but it would n't be any more use talking to that side-whiskered fool than it would be to try to stop the Missouri River by talking to it. From all accounts the Sioux are on the rampage in good earnest, and they are just as certain to catch that outfit as Beelzebub is to catch a cow when he goes for her. I reckon if he was to see them comin', he'd sit still under that flag, and let 'em come up and shoot him full of holes before he fired a shot. That fellow has n't got any more business here than a school-girl. Wish there was some fort in reach,

where I could get him to go: maybe the officers could frighten some sense into him, and save his scalp."

We met men coming back, as well as passed them going. Hard words only these had for the mines, if we stopped to talk with them. No gold there; all the good claims taken up, and most of them played out; water too scarce for placer-mining, and not enough gold to pay, if it was plenty; no work to be had, and everything scarce and high but whiskey; Indians were driving in prospectors, and killing travellers every day; fighting in turn among each other, and road agents robbing on the road, — certainly anything but a pleasant time there from their accounts.

"We'll know through our own eyes before long, Charley," said Capt. Dick, after talking to one of them. "It will be time enough to think about road agents when we are ready to come out. Never had so much money in my life that I could n't take care of it, and I ain't calculatin' on getting it here. I reckon our work is already cut out, and waiting on us, and as to Injins, I ain't afraid of them, if they get a look at these stacks of cats, and if it's night, and they can't see 'em, I'm going to make it my business that they shall hear 'em, and I reckon that'll answer as well as seeing 'em. We won't holler till we're hurt, anyhow."

Most likely the stories about the Indians were stretched a good deal, but there was no doubt that they had been about in plenty, and probably were

yet. Hat Creek had been a battle-ground more than once, and the piles of stones and rude crosses in the mouth of Red Cañon told of travellers whose journeys were over, with tongues that could not be disputed. We kept our eyes open, guns handy, picked camp carefully, and stood guard at night, and were not troubled. I was really more afraid of having our horses stolen by some fellow leaving the mines, than I was of the Indians. Ranches were scattered along the road, but from their looks the ranchmen did n't feel quite as safe as they would have done in Cheyenne. There was one owned by an Englishman that was as neat and clean as any cottage in a city, though the stuffed birds on the piano, the elk-horn hat rack, the curtains held aside by deer antlers, and the guns and revolvers in close company with pictures and books, would have been odd sights in a fashionable parlor. Here they seemed perfectly in keeping with their surroundings, for the city with its luxuries is rushing in to find place before the prairie and mountain have time to clear up for its coming.

CHAPTER XVI.

LITTLE CHANCE FOR HUNTING. A STRANGER IN CAMP. "WHERE WERE YOU RAISED?" A TALK ABOUT INDIANS. TWO SIDES TO THE QUESTION.

WE had heard so much about Indians, and Capt. Dick insisted so much on my not going off alone, that I had not had anything like as many chances for hunting as I expected to have had. I knew there would be still less hope in the Hills, and was very anxious to get an elk before we got in. The country was very rough and broken, full of ravines and gulches, with plenty of thickets and rocks for shelter where Indians could easily waylay any one they saw coming. I did not want to be beaten entirely, however, and whenever we camped early, usually took a stroll on foot, besides the side excursions that I often made during the day, though not half as often as I would like to have done. The farther we got into the Hills the better was the chance for game, but at the same time the more danger there was of Indians. There was never a day that we did not hear about them. I did not believe one half the stories we heard, but the lonely

graves by the wayside, and two wounded men whom we saw at a ranch, were proof positive that they were about.

We camped one evening a little while before sunset, and I took my little "Wesson," and walked away for a hunt. I could n't find anything but rabbits, so I shot three of them and went back to camp. There was a stranger there, a tall, fine-looking man, with black eyes and long black hair. He was dressed in a full buckskin suit, with moccasins and a broad-brimmed hat. As I threw down my game he nodded good-naturedly, and said, —

"Better be careful how you knock around in these diggin's, young one."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because there are too many Injins in 'em to be healthy. They are on the hunt, too, but it's man meat they're after."

"I heard they were bad in the Hills, but did n't suppose there would be any danger from them here."

"There's the trouble. Everybody says, 'Oh, yes, I've heard they're round, but I don't reckon there's any about here.' I've seen a good deal of Injins, an' I ought to know a good deal about them, but what I don't know, an' never expect to, is where they're goin' to turn up. I reckon carelessness is the cause of about two thirds of the killin' the Injins do. You don't catch them being careless, whether they are near or far from the settlements."

"I did n't think about there being any special

danger, but I always try to keep a close lookout, any how, when I'm hunting."

"That's the idea. If a man's a good shot, and can get over ground without making any noise, first sight generally means meat; but if game gets the first sight of him, he ain't apt to need any fire to cook with that night. Man is just the sharpest animal in the world, if he'll keep his ears and eyes open, and his senses about him. Many's the time I've thought, as I was waitin' for a deer to bleed, 'Well, old fellow, you're here because you didn't keep your ears and your eyes open enough. You got off so long that you went off guard this time, and here you are.' When I first commenced, I used to study about things so much that I would clear forget where I was, until some noise, sometimes nothing but the whirr of a grasshopper, would wake me up, and how I'd jump, and the shivers run all over me as I'd think it might have been an Injin sneaking up on me, and me as good as asleep."

"It's very hard though, to be always on the watch. I've been so tired and sleepy sometimes, when I was standing guard at night, that I felt like if the cattle were mine, I would almost be willing to turn them loose, and risk loosing them, to get a little sleep."

"Yes, but it's not cattle you'll lose out here, it's your scalp. But if you've driven cattle much and hunted much, you ought to have learnt how to keep your eyes and ears open."

"There ain't any better hand comes the Trail than Charley," said Capt. Dick.

"I knew from the way he walked and carried his gun, that he was n't any greenhorn, if he was hunting in an Injin country with a pea-shooter."

"I'll bet you fifty dollars he'll kill your mule fifty yards first fire, with that pea-shooter."

"No harm meant, Captain. I don't want my mule killed, and he might do it. That's a 'Wesson,' and they are centre-shooters and hard hitters, but they don't throw enough lead for the Injin country. You want something that will knock down, whether it kills or not. I saw an Injin shot through the heart with a navy six once, but he put an arrow through the man that shot him before he dropped. An Injin is mighty tough, and takes a heap of killing sometimes, and never quits fighting as long as he can raise his arm. That's a mighty nice gun for squirrels and turkeys, but you'd better get one that carries more lead, if you're going to hunt in this country. You'd have to fill a bear full of lead from that gun before he'd stop going. Don't ever pull trigger of as light a gun as that on a grizzly. You'll be gone up sure, if you do."

I got out my "Winchester," and showed him that. He looked at it a moment, tried the working, and then handed it back.

"That's the gun for this country. I've seen all sorts, and tried most of 'em, and that's what I carry. I see men come out here with their fine target rifles,

with all sorts of fine sights and allowances for distance and wind, and all that sort of thing, as if they thought game was going to stand still and wait for them to get all their fixings straight. Just keep your ears and eyes open, and whenever you see an Injin, if he's by himself, put it to him with that gun, and it ain't likely he'll trouble you any more if you hold true."

"I don't intend to shoot at the Indians unless they are going to shoot at us, or try to steal our stock."

"You don't mean to say if you was hid, and was to see an Injin coming along, that you would n't pull trigger on him?"

"No, sir, I would n't. I don't think it is right to kill Indians any more than it is white men."

"Where was you raised, young one?"

"In Texas."

"What part?"

"In Kerr County."

"Well! that's the strangest thing I've heard in many a year. Raised in an Injin country, — worst kind of Injins too, them Comanches and Kickapoos, — and think it ain't right to shoot Injins. Don't they shoot every time they get a chance, and ain't they all the time trying to make chances? Haven't they killed thousands of people, men, women, and children, and ain't they killing 'em every day? Talk about not shooting Injins when you get a chance!"

"There are two sides to this story. The Indians were in this country, and it belonged to them when the

white man first came here. They gave him a welcome, often divided their scanty provisions with him, and taught him to hunt and fish. He was wiser than they were and took advantage of them. Sometimes he made them drunk, and bought their land for a mere trifle, but more often he took possession of what suited him and held it with his rifle and axe. Not satisfied with what was yielded to him, he continually pushed out farther and farther into their country, killing their game, frightening it away, and making it harder for them to get their poor living. He drove them from the graves of their fathers, for which they cared as much as he for his graves, and cut down the woods in which they had held their council-fires. They grew weaker and weaker, and he stronger and stronger. Now and then he called them together to make treaties, but the terms were always of his choosing, and if they refused them, he made war on them, and with his cannon and rifles forced them to agree to them, and took more of their land to punish them. He has driven them westward until the Rocky Mountains are at their backs, and they can go no farther. He has come into their country, which he had solemnly guaranteed to them as long as grass should grow and water run, and killed the buffalo, on which they depend for food, clothing, and tents, by the million, until there is nothing left for him to eat, and he sees his children cry for meat in a country which was overflowing with it before the white man came. With the mountains at his back, a frozen, barren

country on the north, and everywhere else the white man crowding him up closer and closer, and killing his buffalo, until soon there will be none left, what is he to do? What wonder that he fights?"

"Why don't he stay in his reservation and eat his rations? The government furnishes him rations and blankets, and tools to farm with, if he would use them. Nobody would ever kill him on his reservation."

"Have you ever been about the forts and posts where they draw their supplies?"

"Well, first and last, I've seen considerable of it."

"Then you know that they do not get one half of the rations that the government has agreed to give them; you know the flour is often sour and weevilly, and that even of that they do not get fifty pounds where they were promised a hundred, and the same way with the rest of their rations; you know that instead of a beef that would weigh five hundred pounds, they often get only a miserable calf that will not weigh one hundred, and is too poor to eat; you know the blankets are often cut in two, and each half issued to them as a whole one. They are cheated by the agents of the government, and then when drunk on the whiskey the trader has sold them, are cheated by him out of half their remnant. They have nothing to trade. The white man kills for himself the buffalo whose robes he used to buy of them, and will not even allow them to follow

their game when it goes beyond the limits he has set for them.

"Why don't they go to work, then, and make a living like white people?"

"You were not born in this part of the country; how came you out here?"

"Because I just naturally loved to hunt and live in the woods, and hated to follow the plough handles and the hoe, so I lit out from the old farm and went west, and I've kept going west as fast as settlers crowded me, but they have mighty near got me to the jumping-off place now."

"Exactly! The Indian does not like to work. His father nor his grandfather never did, and he has been taught that work was only fit for a woman, and that the warrior ought to live on the game his bow and arrows have brought him. If you, whose people have always lived by work, ran away from your home, and came into his to keep from work, and to live in the wild woods, and the open plains where you could follow the buffalo, elk, and antelope, what wonder that he should prefer hunting the game that ran in his own country, to handling the white man's plough and axe and hoe, and tying himself down to one place!"

"Well, if he don't want to work, he might have let people alone who came into his country and didn't trouble him."

"Wouldn't you shoot a man if you caught him stealing your horses?"

"If I did n't it would be because I did n't have nothing to shoot with."

"Well, the white man has done worse than steal from him. He has robbed him of his country and the game on which he lived. Worse than that, he has often fired into bands of Indians who were at peace and not suspecting any danger. How many men have travelled all through their country without ever being troubled, but were often fed and lodged, and helped on their way! It has almost always been the white man who has struck the first blow. Now just imagine yourself in the place of the Indian; imagine him going to your home, and telling you that he wanted it, and you must move somewhere else, and killing your stock, and ask yourself how you would like it. And remember, too, that the Indian is a man as you are, that he gets hungry and cold as you do, and wants something to eat, and clothes and tents to keep him warm; that he loves his home better than you did yours, because he has fought to keep from being driven from it, and that he loves his wife and children, and hates to hear them cry for food as bad as you would yours. Just put yourself in his place, and ask yourself how you would like it, and what you would do!"

"Why, young one, you talk like a plum lawyer, though there is more truth in what you've been saying than there is in most of their jaw. I'll allow the Injin's been mighty badly treated. I've been about when he was getting his rations, and it's

a plum shame the way them rascally agents do swindle him, that's a fact. He goes with an empty belly many a time because he can't get nothing to put in it, and he not only gets mighty cold in winter, but a heap of 'em actually freezes to death. I know that, because I've seen 'em. That's all so about the buffalo, too. When you take away the buffalo from the Injin, you take his house and his clothes and his grub, and buffalo is getting scarcer and scarcer mighty fast. It's the dern'd skin-hunters what kills 'em up so. But I reckon, young one, if the Injins had fought you as often as they have me, and made you hide out till you were most starved to death, and if you had seen as many women and children stuck full of arrows and scalped as I have, you would n't wait twice before pulling trigger on an Injin when you got a chance. What are you going to do if you sees 'em coming to you when you are not hunting?"

"I shall motion 'em to keep back."

"And if they don't do it?"

"I shall raise my gun and let them know I am going to use it if they don't keep back. I don't intend to trouble them, if they let me alone, but I don't propose to sit still and let them come up and kill me."

"And if you are smart, you won't let 'em get any closer than sure gunshot before you turn loose on 'em either. They are mighty deceitful, Injins are, and would n't ask nothing better than to make believe they are powerful friendly till they get a

chance to lay you out. And you may just bet your bottom dollar the friendliest Injin in the country will steal that horse of yours if he can get half a chance. As to that matter, you are going where there are plenty of white men will be glad to do that job for you. You'll have to sleep with one eye open if you keep that horse in the Hills. Reckon it's time now to tie up for the night. Me and you will have to take it time about to-night Cap'n, to watch camp."

"Oh, no! Charley and Nasho will help us."

"I don't believe in trusting camp to boys, Cap'n. Not that they don't mean to do right, but they for-gits and go to sleep."

"Charley and Nasho are old soldiers. I've tried 'em too often not to know 'em. I can sleep sound every time when I know they are on guard."

"All right, Cap'n, I can stand it if you can. I ain't afraid of this one nohow, but I sorter hate to trust much to the little Mexican that's out after the horses."

"That little fellow was half raised among the Injins. I'll bet he could show you a trick or two would make you open your eyes."

"Well, Cap'n, if you say he'll do, do it is. Just name the watches, and we'll turn in."

"Then I'll put you on the last watch with Nasho, if that's agreeable."

"Right enough. Better tell the young ones to be sure and keep their eyes skinned, and not let any

thief, red or white, get among our horses. Excuse my taking so much dish, Cap'n, but the fact is, when a man's thinking about being set afoot, and maybe losing his scalp besides, he's mighty apt to be partikler about his arrangements before he stretches himself out."

"Don't wait to speak out, Mister. I've been on the Trail, and had to keep a skinned eye many a night, but I don't claim to know much about this Injin business, and I'm glad to learn all I can. I don't think there's many men can tell me much about driving bulls, but I don't forget that Injins ain't bulls. These youngsters naturally look to me to do the bossing, and I'm going to do my best to get this crowd through, horses and all."

"Keep your eyes and your ears open, and your senses about you, and I reckon you'll do it. Injins are mighty smart, but to my notion a white man ought to be smarter if he sets his head to it. We'll want to be moving early to-morrow. Night's for sleeping, when you can get the chance. Give me a shake when you wants me, Cap'n."

CHAPTER XVII.

A HORSE-THIEF CAUGHT. WHAT SHALL BE DONE WITH HIM. CHARLEY KILLS TWO ELKS, AND FINDS A WOUNDED INDIAN.

“**W**HAT shall we do with this fellow, Cap’n,” was the first thing I heard in the morning. “I caught him trying to get away with a couple of our horses, the greedy devil. He was so busy he did n’t know I was around till I had my six-shooter against his ear. That dog of yours made me suspicious something was wrong. Mighty smart dog he is. When he saw I was up and a-watching, he just lay still without making any noise, but ready for a jump if he was wanted. I was about to shoot this cuss, but happening to think of our talk about Injins last right, I concluded to wait and hear what you ’d have to say about it. What do you say about it, young one?”

“Turn him loose, sir ; but let him understand if he is caught about our camp again at night, he will be shot without warning.”

“Nasho,” said Capt. Dick, “this fellow has been caught trying to steal our horses ; what shall we do with him ?”

"Hang him to tree ; he no steal any more den."

"What 's your say, Cap'n?"

"I go with Charley."

"Two for hanging, and two for turning loose. Shall we take your cook's notion about it?"

"I am perfectly willing to hear what he thinks about it, but I'm running this outfit, and I'm not needing any advice that I know of this morning."

"I could 'a' killed him, Cap'n, out there, and nobody would have had a chance to 'a' said anything for or against him."

"You can take him now and go where you please, it will be none of my business; but we ain't keeping this camp to shoot or hang, and if anybody chooses to come into our camp he must give in to our notions about running a camp."

"You're plum right there, Cap'n. This thing of ten or fifteen men camping together, and every man going on his own hook, ain't any good way of gettin' along. Animals know better than that. Every herd has its leader. I'll turn the cuss loose, and let him go."

He stooped down and untied the thief's bonds. The fellow rose to his feet, in a sneaking kind of way, and started off.

"Hold a minute," said Capt. Dick. "If anybody in this crowd finds you about camp again you'll feel lead without a word. Get!"

When he was out of sight, the stranger turned to Capt. Dick, and said, —

"Now, Cap'n, if you have no objection, I'd like to hear the darky's notion about what we ought to have done with him."

"All right. What do you say, Cracklins?"

"Massa Dick, you knows what 's bess to be done, but if dis nigger had 'a' bin wid a crowd ob niggers, he'd 'a' said, 'Tie de derved rascal up, and gib him 'bout a hundred, and den tole him to make tracks and a heap of 'em, and be mighty certain dey did n't none ob 'em p'int t'wards dis camp. I ain't ez powerful fond ob hangin' ez sum folks, and 'pears to me like dat would hab bin 'bout de way to 'a' done dat ting.'"

"Bring up a bucket of water, Cracklins."

As Cracklins got out of hearing, Capt. Dick asked,

"You've heard his idea; what do you think of it?"

"Good enough for a nigger, but you don't catch me helping to whip a white man. You are just a laying up a shootin' from behind the brush for yourself some day when you've forgot all about it. But you're mighty particular 'bout not shooting for to be in an Injin country. When a man starts out to steal horses in the plains, he expects to get shot if he's caught, and no warnin' either. Reck'n you'll learn to be quicker with your shootin'-iurns if you stays out here long."

"It's a very easy thing to use shooting-irons, particularly if the other fellow has n't any idea what's comin'. Any coward can do that. Life's the last thing a man's got, and, according to my notion,

nobody's got the right to take it away from him without mighty good cause, and I reck'n what's mighty good cause to us will lack a heap of being enough to Old Master when He comes to sit on the case. I've had more than one man who had killed his man to tell me if it was to do over again, he'd try mighty hard to find some way of settling the matter. I never knew a man yet to make himself happy by killing another, though I've known several to make themselves so miserable they had as well have been dead. If I catch a man trying to get away on one of our horses, and don't shoot him, it will be because I can't get hold of anything to shoot with; and if a man thinks he can't get along without killing me, I'll do my best to save him the trouble by being too fast for him, but I don't want any man's blood on my hands."

"How about Injins, Cap'n?"

"I ain't any keener to kill an Injin than a white man, but if they interfere with us, we'll give 'em the best we've got."

"Brekfus's reddy, Massa Dick."

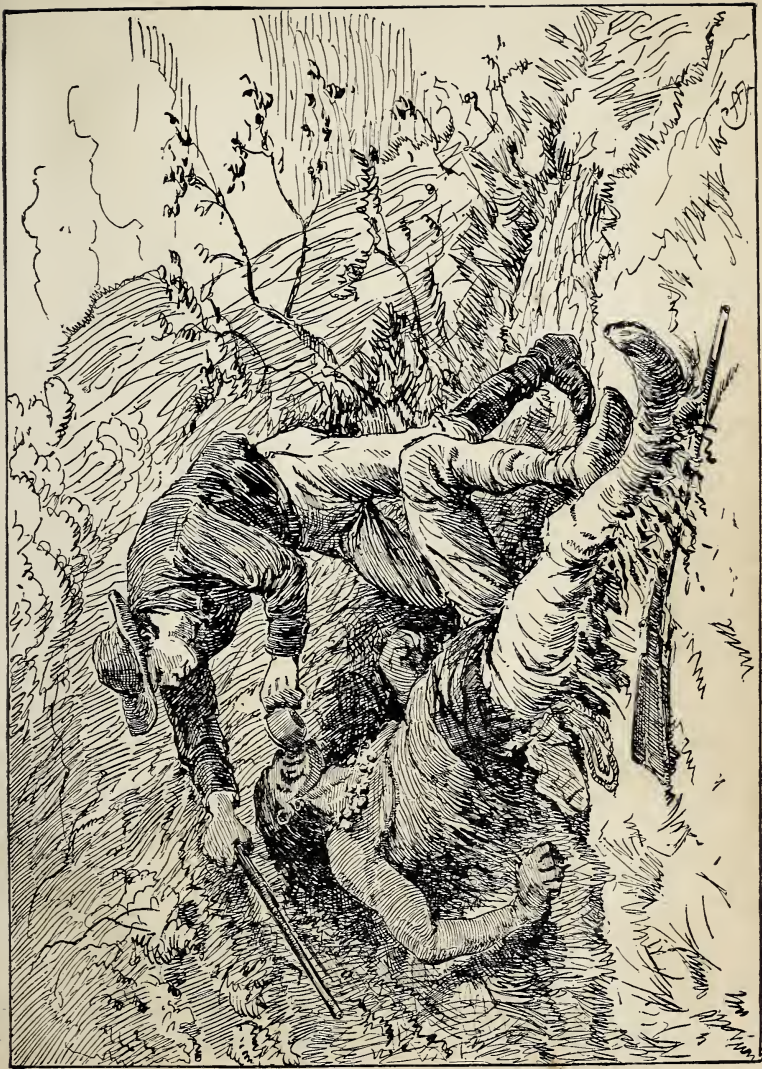
When we broke camp, the stranger took the road to Sidney, and we pulled out again for the Hills. We frequently met men on their way from the Hills. Nearly all of them told the same tale. No gold there or very little, and water too scarce for placer mining. Might do for men who had plenty of money to sink shafts and put in machinery, but no place for a poor man. Work scarce, and poor pay. "Injins so

thick a man dare not leave camp. Somebody goes under every day."

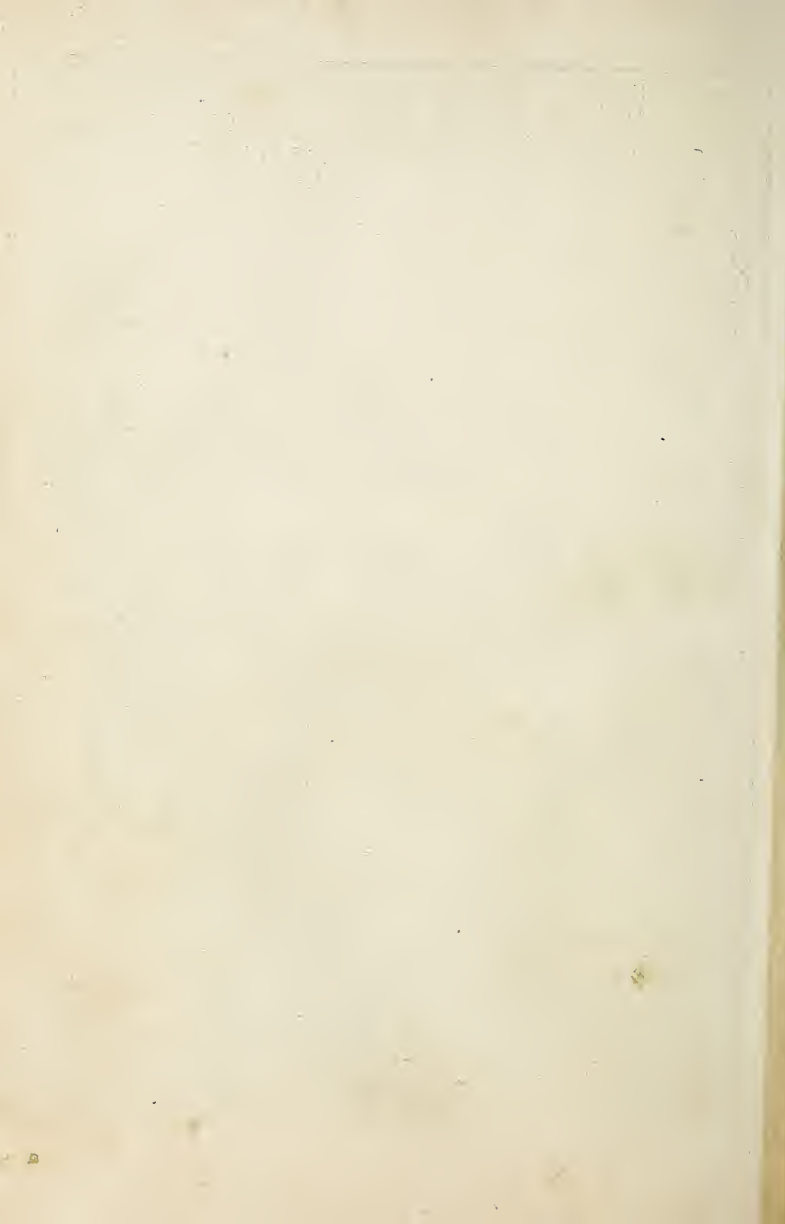
Nothing particular happened until we were in fifty miles of Deadwood. I had hunted a good deal, but with very little success, except in killing rabbits and small game. I wanted an elk. There were said to be plenty of them in the Hills. I knew the game would all be killed off and frightened away around the mines. If I got one at all, it must be before we reached Deadwood. Capt. Dick was always uneasy about me when I was out, but he did n't try to keep me from going. "I know how you feel, Charley," he would say. "It's almost like a part of your business now, and I don't believe in a man's hanging back from his business because there's a chance of his getting hurt attending to it. But do be careful, Charley; keep your eye skinned, and if you see Injins, cut for camp, and if there is any fighting to do, we'll do it together."

I got up that morning at the first streak of day, and taking my Winchester left camp. The air was fresh and bracing. It was a pleasure to breathe it, because every breath seemed to make you feel stronger. I walked quickly along, making as little noise as possible, and stopping every few minutes to listen. I was a mile and a half from camp, when, just as I turned the angle of a pile of rock on the side of a hill, I saw about a dozen elk. They saw me at the same time, and were off down the hillside on a run. I picked the finest buck, but somehow I

could n't catch sight on him. Three times I was about to pull trigger, but every time something kept me from shooting. They had reached the edge of a terrace on the hillside that overhung a creek lined with trees and bushes. In a minute more they would be safe, but just then I caught sight on my buck, and pulled trigger. He gave a tremendous leap over the bush tops. I threw another cartridge into my barrel, and stood waiting. In less than half a minute they came in sight again, climbing the hill on the other side of the creek. My buck was not with them, so I picked out a young doe and let her have it. She sprang up as the bullet struck her, but fell back and rolled down the hill. I loaded again, crossed the creek, ran to her and cut her throat. I turned then to look for the buck. I was just going to jump off a ledge through the top of a thick bush, when my eye caught sight of something underneath that made me spring back as if it had been a snake. I could scarcely keep from halloing. It was an Indian warrior, lying at full length under the bush. I dropped behind a rock, held my gun ready, and watched and listened. I could not hear anything, and the bush did not move. I waited what seemed to me an hour, though I know it was only a few minutes. Still neither sound nor sight of him. I couldn't stay there all day, so I worked myself round, taking care to keep behind rocks as much as possible all the time until I reached a place where I could see under the bush. He lay



CHARLEY AND THE WOUNDED INDIAN. Page 216.



there still as when I first saw him. Shaw! he's dead, I said to myself, and started to rise to my feet, when I happened to think he might be playing dead. I looked again more closely, and could see that his naked side was bloody. The blood had run down on the ground and made a little pool, but it was hard and dried. He must be dead. Again I started to rise, and again I stopped, and looked yet more closely. His eyes were closed, but I could see his chest rise and fall very faintly. He was not dead. He must be insensible, or the firing and the noise made by the elk would have roused him. I rose to my feet, with my rifle ready, and made my way toward him. The buck I had shot lay in the bed of the creek below, dead. I reached the Indian's side. He opened his eyes and tried to rise, but could not. His hand moved as if feeling for his gun, which lay beside him, but it could not find it. The blood began to flow from the ragged hole in his side. His eyes closed again. He was insensible. I jumped down into the bed of the creek, cut the buck's throat, found a pool of water, filled the cup which I always carried at my belt, and made my way back to the Indian. I washed the wound out as well as I could, and stopped it up with some buckskin I cut from my hunting-shirt. The blood began to ooze from underneath him. I got more water, turned him over, and washed and plugged the wound. The same bullet had made both. It had gone clear through him. I got another cup of water and dashed it in his face.

He gasped and opened his eyes. I hurried off for another, which I put to his lips. He drank it eagerly, as if famished. He shut his eyes for a few moments, and then opened them and looked at me as if he thought it very strange I should be there. I brought him another cup of water, which he drank off. He put his hand to his wound, felt the plug, looked at me very strangely, but not as savagely as before, closed his eyes, and dropped off to sleep again.

What was I to do? I could do nothing more for him there, and I could not leave him to die without doing all in my power to save him. I went to the doe elk, cut out some steaks and struck for camp. You may be sure I kept my eyes open on the way back. When I got to camp, I told Capt. Dick what had happened, and that I was going back and take him some medicine and some whiskey. Capt. Dick said he would go with me. The rest had eaten breakfast. I drank some coffee, and ate some meat and bread, while Capt. Dick and Cracklins saddled the horses. We found him just as I had left him.

"He's a pretty sick Injin, Charley," said Capt. Dick, after taking a good look at him, "and he ain't likely to get up from here under a week at the soonest. That ball went through his lungs, and he's nearly bled to death. He ain't got much fever now. I hate to spend a week here, for we haven't any time to lose if we are to get back before winter, but we can't leave this poor devil here to die if he is an Injin.

We have n't got anything but quinine, and that ain't what he wants. If I had some golden rod, I think I could break up that fever, and get him started right. Do you know the golden rod, Charley?"

"I don't believe I do, Capt. Dick."

"There's a little flat just below our camp that is most sure to have some of it. I'll go back and get some. He's in an awkward place here, but I'm 'fraid to move him for fear he will begin bleeding again. Better open and clean your elk while I'm gone, and find some spider webs to plug up those holes in that fellow. It's better than buckskin or cotton even. I'll be back directly, Charley; keep your eye skinned."

He cut out a side of ribs and a ham from the doe elk, fastened them to his saddle, and rode off.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE INDIAN'S COSTUME. CHARLEY AND NASHO TO
STAY WITH THE WARRIOR, AND CAPT. DICK TO
GO ON TO DEADWOOD. BLACKFOOT CHIEF.

I HAD gone to the elk with him. I walked back to the Indian, and took a good look at him. He was a fine specimen of a man, nearly six feet tall and well proportioned, but not at all fleshy. He was naked to the waist, and the sun and wind and rain had tanned his skin until he looked like a bronze statue I saw at Philadelphia. A breech-clout of blue cottonade was fastened around his waist, and a pair of buckskin leggins that fitted tightly covered his legs. Among their fringes hung little bells of steel and brass and bits of silver and copper. A pair of moccasins covered his feet. In each ear was a steel key-ring, from which hung several links of silver chain, ending with a silver plate much larger than a Mexican dollar. He had also a necklace of silver chain wound several times around his neck, to whose links were fastened a number of silver dollars and half-dollars, and gold two dollar and a half and five dollar pieces. A cartridge belt, in which were five

cartridges and a number of empty shells, was buckled around his waist. It was ornamented here and there with silver coins, and its buckle was of silver. A butcher-knife, whose sheath was almost covered with coins and beads, stuck in his belt, and from it hung a raw-hide rope, whose short coils were doubled closely together and wrapped tightly, so as not to catch in the brush. That was to tie any horses he might be able to steal. A red stone pipe, with a stem more than a foot long, was fastened in his belt. The stem was ornamented with porcupine quills, stained red and blue and yellow and wrapped with hair, on which small colored beads had been strung as closely as possible. A little buckskin bag, the mouth of which was closed tightly by a string, hung from his belt. I opened and examined it. It held pieces of roots and barks, some claws, which I took to be panthers', a dried bird's head, some shells, small stones, several bits of buckhorn, and a little wooden image of an eagle. I tied it up again and replaced it. Another little bag held his paint, an awl, some sinew, a flint and steel, and his tobacco. A Springfield breech-loading rifle lay at his side. His face was painted in stripes of red and black, which made it look even more hard and cruel than it would otherwise have done. It was a stern, hard face to look at, and yet it did not seem altogether cruel. I did not wonder at its harshness. He had been taught, when a child, to be stern and harsh, to despise pain, to care little for the mother who had nursed him, and to believe that

to steal and kill were the highest glory a warrior could reach. He had taken the war path in the hope of getting a scalp, which would make him the admiration of his tribe, but, instead of that, he was more likely to die here in the woods. His people would never know where or how he had perished. They would only know he had gone on the war path, seeking for Indian glory, and had never returned. How many skeletons there are over this whole Indian country, of both white and red men, who have been shot down in ambush, at their camp-fires, or in fight, or have escaped for the time with their scalps, only to die alone in the wilderness! What a horrible thing war is!

I turned away, and began hunting for spider webs. It did not take me long to gather two large handfuls of them, for they were stretched thickly among the bushes. How fine the threads are, and so soft, too! Cruel murderers these spiders are! Then I began skinning and cutting up the doe elk. When I had finished, and covered the meat with brush, I went to work on the buck. I was so busy that I forgot where I was, until I heard the ring of iron on rock. How I jumped! It was Capt. Dick and Cracklins. If they had been Indians, and had seen me first, they might have crawled up close enough to have shot me without my knowing they were about. I was ashamed to think I had kept so poor a lookout.

When Cracklins saw the Indian, his eyes stretched and stretched until it seemed as if they would almost pop out of his head.

"Who done shot dat Injun?" he asked.

"We don't know," answered Capt. Dick. "Charley found him here."

"What is you gwine ter do wid 'im?"

"We are going to try and cure him."

"Massa Dick, what do you tink dat heethin sabbage would do wid you ef he had you dar wha he is, an' he was here whar you is?"

"He would put his knife into my heart, and then take my scalp."

"An' you's gwine to cuore him up, and turn 'im loose agin fur ter kill somebody, like ez not sum ob us. 'Pears to me like dat's dern kurious way of Injin fitin'."

"Don't you think a white man ought to be better than an Injin?"

"Sartinly, Massa Dick, but I don't bleebe in bein' good to no snake, case he'll bite you shore arterward, ef ever he gits a chance, an' he's gwine to keep up a close watch fer a chance too. Injins is jist like snakes lyin' in de grass, an' de only way to do 'em is to treat 'em like snakes, — drap a hebby stick on deir heds when you gits a chance. Better lebe dat red debbil, an' gwine 'bout your business, Massa Dick."

"Suppose I had left you where I found you, and gone about my business."

"Reck'n dis nigger would 'a' bin mity well 'quainted wid de ole he debbil long 'fore dis. But dat would n't 'a' bin like dis, Massa Dick. You's like a man sendin'

sumbody out to set man-traps in de woods wha he's goin' to hunt, 'thout knowin' wha day is. Dis red debbil 'll be shore to shoot sum ob us sum day to pay for cuorin' ob 'im, an' turnin' ob 'im loose, instead ob knockin' 'im on de head."

"Maybe so, Cracklins, but he is a man that needs help, and I am going to help him all I can, and I ain't afraid any harm will come to any of us in future for it. Finish skinning and cutting up that elk, and be quick about it, too. And don't have anything to say about this business to anybody."

"Sartinly not, Massa Dick; I ain't gwine ter say nuthin' ter nobody. Dey wud jest tink you wuz crazy, and 't ain't none ob deir bizniss."

"Charley," said Capt. Dick to me, "this is a poor place for a camp; let me see if I can't find a better one." He mounted Beelzebub and rode away, but came back in a few minutes.

"Cracklins, come and help me move this Indian. Charley, bring the horses along, and my rifle and the axe."

Capt. Dick took hold of the Indian's shoulders, and Cracklins his legs, and they moved off carefully through the brush. Two or three hundred yards brought us to a beautiful pine meadow of about forty acres, sloping gently eastward from a little branch thickly lined with heavy underbrush. The trees were tall and straight, and not thick-set, the grass was green, and thicker than it usually is in pine woods, and about the centre was a single elm, with a thick,

heavy top, whose branches, beginning but a few feet from the ground, made a solid shade, — just the place for a camp. We cleared up a place under this tree, brushing away the pine cones and sticks, and strewed it with broom from the pine and grass from the creek bank, and laid the Indian down. I built a little fire of dry sticks, and put on a quart cup and little pot Capt. Dick had brought, with golden rod in one and witch-hazel in the other. Cracklins was sent back to finish the elk.

“Well, Charley,” said Capt. Dick, “we have got our foot in it now. I’m sorry for this poor devil, but I’m most sorry-you found him. He’ll keep us here ten days, or a week at shortest, and time is money to us now.”

“It won’t do for all hands to stay here, Capt. Dick. The cats must go on so as to get them out of their close quarters as soon as possible. I found this fellow, and I’ll stay here and take care of him the best I can, until he is able to travel.”

“Do you think I would risk your life, Charley, for all the cats in the world?”

“Capt. Dick, you’ve risked your life many a time for Col. Hunt’s cattle. You came here on my business. We can’t afford to lose what we have put into this speculation. One of us must go on to Deadwood and sell our freight as soon as it gets there, and you are the right one to go.”

“That would all be well enough, if there was no risk in your staying here.”

"I do not think there is much risk. Nearly all the Indians are with Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. There are not likely to be many of them on this trail. I don't think they will find me here, and, at the worst, there ain't much danger of my being caught on Comanche."

"I don't think myself, Charley, there is a great deal of danger, but there is some, and I'd never forgive myself if I was to leave you here, and you were found laid out by these bloody devils. I ain't as keen for money as all that."

"Capt. Dick, I don't think anybody ought ever to stand back from going anywhere, or doing anything that duty calls on him to do. And mostly, to my notion, a man's business is his duty. Ours has been driving cattle, and it has took us through some pretty hard work, and into not a little danger. I don't think either of us would respect the other if he had failed to jump when the cattle broke, or follow them wherever they went, day or night, sun or storm. Now we made it our business to go to the Black Hills in search of money that we believe is buried there. We believed we could make some money in this speculation, and we have gone into it. It is part of our business. But I happen to run across this Indian, and it is my duty to stay and take care of him. But it is your duty to go on and keep our business from suffering."

"That would all be right enough, if there was no danger in your staying. What good will it do for me

to go on and make some money, if the Indians kill you?"

"Capt. Dick, you may be very certain I would n't stay here if I thought the Indians would get me. I think I am worth more than this Indian, and if it was my life or his, I would n't hesitate a minute to let his go. There is some danger in staying, and there would be some in my going on to the Hills with you. There is no certainty that you will not be laid out before getting there. We have to take the risk in these things."

"If you were a man, Charley, it would be different. I don't like to think of leaving you here alone to take the chances of being found and killed by the Injins."

"Have n't I done a man's work on the Trail?"

"Yes; a good one's, too. Two of them for that matter, many a time."

"I expect to be a man some day. Had n't I better commence whenever I have a chance. I don't feel like there is much more risk in staying here, than there was in going off with Nasho after the cattle we lost when the buffalo ran over us. Then we did n't have anything but our horses and pistols, and now I have everything I could ask for, and am close to people besides."

"I would feel differently about it, Charley, if it was on anybody's business but our own. We can take risks for other people that we won't for ourselves."

"I think we ought to be just as faithful to our own business as to that of other people. I think it is just

as much your business to go on and keep us from losing what we have put into this speculation, as it is mine to stay here. We can't afford to lose the money we have worked hard for, when there is no necessity for it. Don't you be afraid that I won't come up all right."

"Well, Charley, I reckon it will have to be that way. I never in all my life hated to do anything worse than I do to leave you here. If it was n't for the derved cats I could stay here with you, but it wont do to keep them penned up there for a week or ten days, and I don't think it would be a good idea to leave them to the teamster to take on and sell. Nasho will stay with you, I know. I don't think the Injins are likely to happen on you here, and if they do, you must light on to your horses and leave here in stampede time. As you say, there 's danger everywhere, and a man runs into it sometimes when he thinks he is playing old to keep out of it, and gets out of it sometimes when he 's looking every minute to jump square into it. You had better go to camp, get your blankets, robe, whatever tricks you want, and provisions, plenty to last you two weeks. Tell Nasho to come with you. If you have too much to carry, load your things on to old Jack, and I'll take him back. Be sure and get everything you want, and plenty of provisions. Bring back some of that doe elk; it 's better eating than the buck."

I rode back to camp, taking Cracklins with me with a load of meat. When I began getting my

things together, Mr. Cheervix asked me what I was up to. I told him I was going to stay and take care of the Indian.

"Well, ef that ain't the derndest fool trick ever I heerd uv a sensible man's doing. Gwine to cuore up a Injin so he kin fill you full uf lead some day. You'll deserve it, too, for being such a fool. What's the Cap'n about that he don't larn you better'n that?"

"Don't you think, Mr. Cheervix, if you were lying out there in the brush with a hole through you, and helpless as a baby, you would be glad to have an Indian come along and take care of you? Would you think he was a fool for doing it?"

"Uv coorse I'd be powerful glad to see anybody in the shape uv a human, but I'd jist as soon expect to see a angel with blue wings a comin' down from hevin, ez to git eny help frum a Injin. I'd low furter git my har lifted fast nuff, ef I seed one uv the red devils comin', and that's what he'd do fur me to a plum sartinty."

"Indians have saved white men many's the time. And if they had n't, I think I know better what's right than an Indian, and I want to try to do it."

"An' while you're tryin' to save one Injin what'll knock you on the head some day to pay you for it, some more'll come 'long an' lift all your scalps."

"I don't expect to lose my scalp, but I don't think there is any better time for a man to die than when he is doing his duty."

"I ain't a goin' to dispute that with you, but you

bet your las bott'm dollar I'm gwine to put off that dyin' biznis jest ez long ez I kin, stead uv runnin' more 'n half-way to meet it. You'll larn better sense when you've bin on the plains ez long ez I hev, and seed ez much uv Injins ez I hev. An' what the devil are you up to, Nasho?"

"Me go wid Carley."

"Well, dern my buttons! I wonder ef thar's ary anuther camp in these mount'ns that can turn out two sech young ones. Hanged ef I did n't think you two young ones hed cut yer eye teeth, and here you are a stickin' yer heds into a hornet's ness with yer eyes open. You ort 'a' larnt better 'n that, anyhow, Nasho."

"Me no tink it good go nuss Injun, but me go wid Carley."

"An' git yer derved scalp tuk fur yer trouble."

"Maybe so not. Maybe so, Carley and Nasho take care ob demselbes."

I was glad to hear Nasho say he was going. I did n't intend to ask him, but I was very anxious for him to go. I didn't relish the idea of being out there in the mountains by myself a bit. As we wanted to take a sack of oats along to feed our horses, we took old Jack, and packed that and our other things on him. We had some flour, bacon, coffee, sugar, tea, dried fruit, potatoes and onions, and salt and pepper, with some of the elk meat, a frying-pan, saucepan, coffee-pot, cups, and our bedding. Of course we had our guns and pistols, and

we took our bows and arrows too. I slipped a couple of books in my saddle-bags. Altogether we had quite a load, and when a small tent was thrown over the whole, and strapped down tight and fast, Jack was both high up and thick through.

"Mass Charley," said Cracklins, as he came up to tell me good by, "I does hate mighty bad fur ter see you gwine off ter nuss dat good-fur-nuffin debbil ob an Injin. Mighty feard you'll git knocked on de hed, an' we'll nebber see yer no moah. Keep yer eye skinned, Mass Charley, and ef you sees a Injin, don't wait fur him to come no closer, but jis jump on ter Comanche, and lebe dar fass."

"Oh, we'll come up all right, Cracklins."

"Mr. Cheervix, don't say anything to Capt. Dick about our staying behind with this Indian. He feels badly enough about it now, and don't want to leave us. It is not his doing, anyhow."

"Jeeminy-crimeny! 't aint none uv my biznis, an' I ain't carin' a straw. Hope you'll bring yer scalps back with yer, though it's dern'd doubtful."

"Why, Charley," said Capt. Dick, as we rode up, "you look like you were fixed up for a six months' trip."

"Well, Cap'n Dick, one needs just about as much for six days, outside of grub, as they do for six months."

"That's a fact, Charley. I've given this fellow a big dose of golden rod, and plugged up these holes in him with spider-web soaked in witch hazel tea. Keep

them wet with it, but don't take them out unless they get clotted. If he comes to this evening, give him a good big drink of the golden rod ; and if he don't, you had better rouse him up and give it to him anyhow. In the morning he's pretty sure to be awake. Give him one of these pills, another at three hours, and another after three hours more. The same thing the next day, and if he seems feverish, give him the golden rod pretty freely. There's no danger of its hurting him. If he wants anything to eat, cook him some rice, and some soup, if you have anything to make it out of. I think he'll come to himself all right to-morrow, and be ready to take care of himself in a week, and just as soon as he is, leave him some grub, and light out for Deadwood. Come in and take a look at him, Nasho. What tribe does he belong to?"

"Blackfoot heap bad Injun."

"Do you know him?"

"Me nebber see him before, but me know Black-foot moccason ; him chief."

"How do you know?"

"Him got king-eagle feather in hair."

"Well, if he's Blackfoot he's a long ways from home, and on some devilment, too, I'll bet. Charley, for God's sake keep your eye skinned while you're here. Don't fire a gun if it can be helped, and keep your horses close by you. Lord, how I do hate to go 'way and leave you boys here! I'll move on to Deadwood as fast as I can, and do the best I can

when I get there. Dern the cats! I wish they were in the Gulf. For heaven's sake, boys, take care of yourselves, and keep your eyes skinned."

"Don't you be uneasy about us, Capt. Dick. We'll come out all right."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE INDIAN RECOVERS HIS SENSES. LIFE IN CAMP.
-LEARNING INDIAN. CHARLEY KILLS A MOUNTAIN
LION, AND GETS A LESSON FROM HIM IN HUNTING.
COMANCHE'S ADVENTURE WITH WOLVES.

AS soon as we had unsaddled our horses and staked them out, we stretched the tent over the Indian. Then we hung up our blankets in the tree, and placed our provisions on its forks. We stretched one blanket over the low-hanging limbs of the elm in such a way that it sheltered us from the sun. Then we broiled some bacon and elk meat, and made some coffee for dinner. While we were eating, Nasho said, —

“Must keep eye skinned, Carley ; no chance hide here. Injun sure to see if come dis way.”

“No, there's no chance for us to hide. This tent and our horses would catch an Indian's eye as far as he could see. But there is one good thing about it : if we keep anything like a sharp lookout, there is no chance for an Indian to creep upon us, except in the night, and even then Rover and the horses ought to tell us they are coming, if we watch them

and keep our ears open. And if we should have to fight, there is no cover for Indians except these pine-trees, and we ought to be able to keep them from getting near us. I think that is the reason why Capt. Dick picked this place for a camp."

"Yes, good place for camp. Must keep watch at night. Me sleep some now."

He spread down our buffalo robe, lay down and went to sleep. There was nothing to do about camp, so I got one of my books and read. I didn't enjoy it much, though, because I had to look up every two or three minutes, to see if there was anything suspicious going on. I read awhile, and then practised shooting with my bow and arrows. I had brought them with me because I could not use my rifle, and thought I might kill some rabbits and birds. I can manage tolerably well with them, but not nearly so well as Nasho. To my notion, there is nothing for shooting like a good rifle. You have to hold it very true and steady, but if you do that it is just sure death.

Next morning the Indian was a great deal better. He did not seem surprised when I went to him in the tent, though he looked as if things were rather strange. I don't think he knew much of what had happened to him. I showed him how to swallow the pill, and he took it without making any objection. I had put some elk meat on to cook after supper, and in a little while I had some good soup, which he seemed to relish very much. He ate some rice, too.

I reckon he don't get much of either at his home. I believe the Assiniboinés are the only Indians that boil meat, except where they have learned it from the whites.

Lying in camp with nothing to do is tiresome work to me. I had a great deal rather do hard work. To feed and water the horses, and cook our meals, only took a little while every day. When breakfast was over there was nothing to do until dinner, and after dinner nothing until supper. We shot with our bows and arrows, and pitched dollars, and Nasho slept a good deal, and I read. One of us had to be awake all the time, and on the watch, too. This having to be always on the watch for Indians is a great thing to keep one from being careless.

The Indian was very little trouble. He took his medicine without any difficulty, and seemed to sleep most of the time. I spent a good deal of time with him learning Blackfoot. I would hold up my gun, or bow, or bridle, and he would pronounce its Indian name. I would call it after him until I got it right. Then I would pronounce its English name, and he would call that until he got it right. He seemed to take a great deal of interest in teaching me in this way, but did not care much about learning English. As I spent several hours with him every day, I learned a good deal of his language. I put the Indian words down in my note-book, so that, if I should forget them, I could turn to that and find them. He showed more interest in my watch and

compass and gun than anything else. He would look at the watch and compass for half an hour at a time. It was not much trouble to learn the names of things that I could point to, but it was almost impossible to get him to understand such ideas as "life, death, love, hate, glory," etc. Anybody who had never seen it would hardly believe how much can be told by signs. Nasho says the Indians all understand it, and can talk with each other in that way when they do not understand each others' languages. It does very well for simple things that they have seen, but I don't believe anybody living could give an Indian any idea of a watch by any description he could give him of it, if he had never seen one, because they have no idea of springs and wheels and machinery. I had brought a book on natural history with me, and would often show him the pictures. He recognized readily those of the horse, dog, buffalo, deer, and such as he had seen, and would call their names. He would point to the pictures of the camel and rhinoceros, and others that he had never seen, and look at me to ask their names. I think he was pretty intelligent for an Indian, but he would soon get tired of what I showed him. He knew what the golden-rod and witch-hazel were, and gave me to understand that they were Indian medicine, too. He described to me how he came to be shot. He had slipped into a camp at night, and stolen a horse. When he got on him to ride him off, the horse commenced pitching. The noise woke

one of the men, and he ran out and fired at him two or three times. The last shot hit him, and he fell from the horse, but he was strong enough to get away through the brush, and travel to where I found him. I could understand him as plainly as if he had talked.

The second day we were there Nasho found a hole in the creek, and caught a fine string of fish. They were perch and trout, and real good eating. I hunted a good deal, and killed some squirrels and rabbits, and one turkey. I always carried my rifle with me, so as to be ready if I should run across Indians, but I would not shoot at game with it. I would have been perfectly willing to have taken the risk of any Indians hearing it, but, on Capt. Dick's account, I thought I ought not to make any noise that I could avoid. I had several good chances at deer, and it was real hard to let them walk away when it would have been so easy to have stopped them, but I did. One night we heard two coons fighting close to camp, and Nasho took his bow and arrows, and Rover, and went to them, and killed both. A fat coon is right good eating. They are more like little bears than anything else.

One day, when I was out hunting, on turning the corner of a big rock I came right face to face with a mountain lion. He wasn't over twenty feet from me, and was as much astonished as I was, but before he had time to recover himself I had pitched my rifle to my shoulder, and sent a ball through his head

that laid him out. I was following an elk trail, and wondered what he was doing on the same trail, but coming back on it instead of going forward. When I came to examine it more closely, I found there were two sets of tracks, and *he was on the freshest*, which led the opposite way from the one I was going. He was a better hunter than I was, but I was a little too quick for him. Sometimes I am afraid I never will learn to be a good hunter. The idea of following the cold end of a trail! I had just as well dig toward the root to find the ear on a cornstalk. If I had looked at it close enough, the tracks would have told me what the lion's nose told him. One can hardly be careful enough in hunting. It makes me think, sometimes, of doing a long sum in arithmetic. You may be careful, and get nearly through, and then make a little mistake, and it all comes wrong. So, in hunting, you may follow a trail half a day, until it gets real hot, and then get a little careless, and make a slight noise, and away goes your game; or, if you don't keep up the closest kind of a watch, you will lose the track altogether. When I found what a goose I had been, I would have liked to have taken the right end, and followed up the trail, and seen if I could not find the elk that made it, but I wanted to save the skin of the mountain lion, so I set to work and skinned it very carefully, leaving the head on. He wasn't hard to skin, though his skin was tough. It was too heavy to carry, and I had to go back to camp and get Co-

manche. When I got back again, I found I could not raise the skin on to the horse's back. I tied my rope to it and made Comanche drag it under a good-sized sapling. Then I pulled the sapling down, and got a loop of the skin fastened to it. When I turned it loose it raised the skin almost clear of the ground, and, leading Comanche close up to it, I got it over his back. When I got to camp with it, Nasho helped me skin the head, and rub the brains into the hide, after carefully scraping all the flesh off of it. Nasho dressed it for me, and it made a beautiful skin, though not as pretty as a leopard's. It is called a mountain lion, but is much more like a panther than an African lion.

The Indian grew better very rapidly, and in a week could sit up nearly all day and walk around freely. I suppose it must be because they are so healthy that they get well so fast. Nasho says they nearly always do. He cared very little for bread, but was very fond of sugar and coffee. Nasho said we would have to watch him closely, to keep him from slipping off some night, and taking our horses, but I was n't afraid of that. I don't believe he is that mean.

One night I was aroused by a low growl from Rover. Raising up, I could see in the moonlight three big, gray mountain wolves, not more than fifty yards from camp. Two were sitting on their haunches, and the other one standing up. They were all looking first at camp, and then at the horses. Rover looked up at me, and snuffed a little. I told him to

be still, and watched the wolves, to see what they would do. They moved a little nearer the horses, and stopped again. So they kept on, moving a little nearer, and stopping and keeping perfectly quiet. I strung my bow without frightening them, and picked out one of my best steel-pointed arrows, and held it ready. Nasho had n't waked up, but I thought I ought to give him a chance too, so I laid my hand on him. He did n't jump up, as most boys would have done, but just said, —

“What matter, Carley?” in a whisper, laying his hand on his gun.

“Just some wolves, Nasho. Be easy, and don't frighten them, but get your bow.”

Without getting up, he reached his bow, strung it, slipped his quiver over his shoulder, and then raised up very quietly. Two of the wolves had separated from the other, and were moving towards Comanche, trotting around slowly, smelling about, and lying down and rolling. They did n't seem to be noticing him at all, but they kept getting closer to him. He was n't asleep, but was watching them, though he did n't seem to be paying any attention to them. The wolves separated. One moved toward his head, and the other so as to come up behind him, but still keeping up their tricks as if they were not noticing.

“Dey jump on him directly, Carley; better shoot,” Nasho whispered.

“No; wait, and let us see what he will do. He 's watching them.”

The one behind him was almost close enough to jump on him. He turned quietly, so as to bring himself a little farther from that one, and directly facing the other. They worked on until they were a little nearer, and then, before I was expecting it, both sprang at once, — one at his throat, and the other at his heels. He caught the last one with a kick from both heels that landed him in ten feet of us. Before he knew it, Rover had a grip on his throat that soon choked out what little life Comanche had left in him. I never could tell how it was done, it was so quick, but Comanche reared up, and struck the other one, as he came in his leap, such a blow with his forefeet, that he fell all doubled up under him, and, between pawing and kicking, in less than half a minute that wolf was laid out for good. The other set up a disappointed howl. We let fly at him, and he dropped with two arrows through him. I went up to Comanche, and petted him. I felt like I had treated him badly, because if the wolves had got hold of him they might have lamed him, or cut him badly, or even killed him, before we could have helped him. He did n't have a fair chance, tied to the tree.

"Comanche heap too smart for wolf," said Nasho.
"Dey no catch him sleepin'."

Next day we skinned the wolves, intending, as we had so little to do, to dress their skins, carried them on our horses away from camp, and hid them in brush thickets. It would have been easier to have dragged them away, but that would have made too much sign.

CHAPTER XX.

A VISIT FROM PAWNEE SOLDIERS. THEY WANT TO SHOOT THE BLACKFOOT. "LEAVE!" CAMP BROKEN UP AND START FOR THE HILLS. A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY. BURYING THE DEAD.

BY the tenth day the Indian was so much better. that we thought he was able to take care of himself. We determined to leave, the next morning, for the Hills. That evening we were all in camp. The Indian was sitting in front of the tent, making a pipe out of a piece of red sandstone. Nasho was plaiting a tail for his quirt. I was reading. All of a sudden, I don't know what made us, for I don't remember hearing any noise or sound in particular, we all looked up in the direction opposite to the creek. Five Indians, on horseback, were riding by several hundred yards off.

"Pawnee," said Nasho, "sojers."

They saw us at the same time, and with a whoop and yell dashed towards us as hard as they could come.

"Watch close, Carley; no shoot."

We had both picked up our rifles, and held them

so that we could use them in a second. The Pawnees came on, yelling and whooping as if they were going to run right over us, but pulled up hard just in front of us. I knew that was the way Indians often came up, and did n't expect any trouble. As they caught sight of the Blackfoot, they all raised a peculiar yell, and two of them threw up their guns to fire. I jumped in between, and cried out, "Stop!" Nasho stood ready to back me.

"What for no shoot. Blackfoot heap big rascal," one of the Pawnees cried out excitedly. Their actions were threatening, but they had both lowered their guns.

"Indian in white man's tent, Pawnee can't shoot him," I answered.

"Pawnee heap white man's friend ; sojer for white man. Blackfoot heap kill white man ; heap kill Pawnee ; heap bad Injun. Pawnee kill Blackfoot."

"Pawnee find Blackfoot on prairie, Pawnee and Blackfoot fight ; if Pawnee bravest Indian, Pawnee whip. Pawnee cannot come to white man's tent and kill Blackfoot. White man cannot come and kill Blackfoot."

They rode off a few steps, and had a talk among themselves. I could tell, from his face and his motions, that the one who had wanted to shoot was very anxious to kill the Indian. I wanted to give the Blackfoot a revolver, so that he would have a better chance for his life, and could help us if we had to fight them, but I was certain it would make the

Pawnees more angry. I was afraid, too, the Blackfoot might be too quick to shoot. He looked like he thought he was in a pretty close place, but there was nothing of the coward about him. I had no doubt the Pawnees would try to scare us into giving the Blackfoot up, but I did not believe they would fight us for him, because if they did n't kill us both it would be found out on them, and they would be severely punished for it. I was more afraid of their trying to get the advantage of us, shooting the Indian and running away, but was determined to protect him to the last. If they did carry matters so far as to fire, I would throw the Blackfoot my revolver, and we would fight it out. I told Nasho what I thought, and what I was going to do, and to watch them closely and keep between them and the Blackfoot, so they could n't shoot him.

"Dey no want hurt us, Carley; dey want kill Blackfoot. Blackfoot and Sioux all same. Pawnee and Sioux heap fight. Dey try and shoot Blackfoot, maybe we get in way, and get shot. Blackfoot much bad Injun; fight white man heap; may be so we better let Blackfoot go, den we sure no get hurt."

"He is our prisoner, Nasho, and they can't touch him until they have laid me out."

"All right, Carley; me wid you. No shoot if can help."

The Pawnees rode up to us again. Nasho stepped up a little closer to me, and we both stood in front of the Blackfoot. The same one who had spoken before now began again.

"Pawnee heap friend white man. Pawnee white man sojer; fight Sioux heap. Blackfoot all same Sioux; kill white man heap. Pawnee kill Blackfoot."

"Let Pawnee find Blackfoot on prairie, and not come to white man's camp for him."

"Blackfoot kill Pawnee's brother. Pawnee kill Blackfoot where can find him."

The fellow was so insolent that I got mad. "Look here, Pawnee, if you try to touch this Blackfoot, I'll blow daylight through you. Leave!"

As I spoke I unbuckled my revolver, and threw it to the Blackfoot, telling him not to shoot until I did. I was in dead earnest, and I reckon they saw it, for they turned their horses and rode away. I was glad to see them go, because I did n't want to have to fight them, but I was determined they should n't touch our prisoner. I turned round to see how he felt about it. He came to me, took my hand, put it on his breast, and said something that I could not understand. Then he handed me back my pistol. I was afraid the Pawnees would try and slip up and shoot the Blackfoot that night, and we kept up a close watch, but we never saw any more of them.

The next morning I asked the Indian if he could n't take care of himself now. He told me he could, and gave me to understand that he would start home and travel slowly. We gave him one of our largest haversacks full of bread and dried meat, some coffee and ~~sugar~~, a quart cup, some matches, and a blanket. We shook hands with him to leave. He took the

image of the eagle out of his medicine-bag, fastened a string to it tightly, and hung it around my neck, putting it inside of my under-shirt, and motioning to me not to take it off, day or night. We rode off, leaving him at the camp. When we had gone a hundred yards I turned back to him, unbuckled my revolver, and gave it to him, with some cartridges, telling him, in his own language, not to shoot white men with it. He made me understand that he would never try to hurt us, but that white men tried to kill him, and he would kill them if he could. I did not like to put a weapon in his hands that he might use against white people, but I thought how I would feel to be left so far from our people, weak from a severe wound, with an enemy's country to travel through, and only three or four cartridges to defend myself with and kill game to eat. I left him standing at the broken-up camp, and soon caught up with Nasho.

Our blankets, and tent, and skins, and camp tricks made us look as if we were loaded up for a long trip, but they were not very heavy, and we made pretty good time travelling. There is some real pretty country on the road. Most of it is hilly and broken, and a first-rate place for Indians. There is scarcely a hundred yards in Red Cañon that has not been fought over, and many a mound of stones shows where some miner has fallen by the way, before reaching his journey's end. There were plenty of miners on the road, and we stopped with some party every

night. Custer City, which so many thought would be the largest place in the Hills, was almost deserted. Many of the houses had been moved away, but there were still a good many standing. Some had been abandoned before they had been finished. Many think yet that there is plenty of gold there, but water is scarce, and the mines cannot be worked without it. A few were going ahead with their claims, and one company was building a long water-race, or flume, as they call it in mining, to bring water to their claim in a gulch. I rode up to several deserted houses. They had been roughly and carelessly built, and were already falling to pieces. A whole family of cats came out of one. A dog moves with his owner or the family, but a cat stays with the house.

On the morning of the day on which we reached Deadwood, Nasho and I had taken a very early start, and ridden ahead of the party with whom we had camped. We had gone several miles when we heard firing on the road ahead of us. We dashed ahead as fast as we could go, and in about a mile came to a wagon in the road. On one side of it lay a man with three ball-holes in him, his throat cut, and three arrows sticking in him. His arms were cut across at the wrists, his breast had been cut open, and there were deep gashes on his legs. The whole scalp had been taken. Only a few feet from him lay the body of a woman, whom we supposed to be his wife. She could hardly have been more than twenty years old.

She had been stripped of her clothing, but not mutilated in any way, except that the top of the scalp had been taken. Her long curls hung down over her shoulders, and except for that ghastly place on top of the head, and the blood-spots on her neck and breast, one would never have supposed she had met such a horrible death. She had been killed by a shot through the head behind the ear. Her face was as quiet and peaceful in expression as if she were only asleep. Under the wagon lay the body of a little girl, not more than four years old. I will not try to describe her appearance. She had been tomahawked and scalped. She must have been the last one killed; most likely had stayed in the wagon until her parents had been killed, and was then dragged out and butchered. I don't think the mother's face could have been so quiet and peaceful if she had known what had happened to her child. A large, heavy-built dog, tied to the axle, lay dead by the child, shot through with ball and arrows. Provisions, bedding, and the other contents of the wagon lay scattered around. The sacks of flour and meal had been cut open. We saw no sugar or coffee. The Indians had doubtless taken what there was. One of the wagon mules had been killed, the rest were carried off. I took some of the bedding and covered the bodies up, and we sat down to wait until the party we had camped with should come up. It was the first time I had ever seen death in this shape. It was so terrible! It did not seem so for the man,

because, when a man goes into country where the Indians are hostile, he takes the risk of being killed and scalped, but to think of that poor woman, so young and pretty, to be so suddenly snatched from life and her child in such a horrible way was sickening. Yet I could scarcely feel sorry that she and her child had been killed rather than carried off into captivity by human monsters that scarcely knew the meaning of mercy, and hated the whites worse than anything else that has life in its veins. There was no need to ask who had done it. The inhuman murderers were proud of their bloody deed, and had put their marks on their butchered victims, that it might be known who had done it. They were glad to have the hatred of the white men. Those cuts across the arms were the work of the Cheyennes. Cheyenne means cut-arm, and the drawing the hand across the arm is the sign by which they make themselves known at a distance. The throats of the man and child were gaping from the knives of the Sioux. Drawing the hand across the throat is the sign by which the Sioux make themselves known. I could not understand why they had mutilated the little girl so shockingly, and had left the mother almost untouched. At the gashing of the man I did not wonder, because they looked upon him as a robbing enemy, upon whom it was a delight to wreak their savage vengeance. As I sat there and thought of the terrible suspense of the poor woman while her husband was fighting for their lives, and her anguish


as she saw him fall, and, without a thought of herself, leaped from the wagon to go to him, my blood almost boiled. I do not blame the Indian for defending his right to his home with arms in his hands. Remembering how he has been raised, I do not altogether blame him for the way in which he makes war, or that he looks upon every white man as his enemy, but I shall never forget that woman and child. I thought of the Blackfoot whom we had so lately had in our power, and I did not regret that we had treated him as we had. I do not think it right to hold other Indians responsible for what these have done, and I never intend to try to kill an Indian unless in fair fight of his making, but if I ever do get into a fight with them, I shall remember what I have seen to-day, and you may be certain I won't shoot any the less steady because of it.

It was not long before our party came up. I heard some low, deep curses from men who had not uttered an oath at the camp-fire the night before, and I think there was scarcely one there that would not have been glad to have had a chance at the Indians who had done the deed, but the party was not strong enough to go in pursuit, and there would have been little chance of overtaking them in these mountains, had they been ever so strong. A wide grave was dug by the roadside, the bodies were carefully wrapped in pieces of bedding and laid side by side, the little girl between her parents, and boards from the wagon were placed over them. The whole party

then gathered around with uncovered heads, while the oldest man read the burial service. Then the grave was filled up and marked with a board at the head, bearing their names and the date, and the words,—

“KILLED BY THE INDIANS.”

The party did not have team enough to haul the wagon, so the Bible in which their names had been found, their chest of clothing, and a few of their household things were taken, to be sent to their friends, and the rest was abandoned. A statement of how the wagon was found, and to whom it belonged, was written out on paper and tacked to the front of the wagon, and we all rode away from the scene of one of those tragedies that have made so many lonely graves on the wide prairies, in the deep forests, and amid the wild mountains, and carried so much suffering and anguish to the family circles in far-away homes, where their places are vacant forever.



CHAPTER XXI.

REACH DEADWOOD. A HEARTY WELCOME FROM CAPT. DICK. THE CAT SPECULATION A SUCCESS. NEWS ABOUT THE DIGGINGS. THE ROAD AGENTS. THE INDIANS. CRACKLINS'S OPINION.

WE had been delayed a good deal by the sad occurrences of the morning, but I was so anxious to get to Capt. Dick again, that I determined to push on and try and make Deadwood that night. Our company insisted on our staying with them for our own safety, but I thanked them, told them I thought we would make it through safe, and we rode ahead. It was so dark when we reached the town that we could not tell anything about it, except that we could see by the lights that it seemed to be strung out along a hollow between two hills, with scattering houses part way up their sides.

Riding up to a restaurant where a number of men were sitting, smoking and talking under its front awning, I asked if any of them could tell us where Capt. Dick was camped.

"The man that brought in two wagon-loads of cats? You see that bright light up there on the

hillside by itself? Well, you'll find him there, I reckon. Don't know what took him away off there by himself. Reckon he thinks that black horse of hisn'll be safer away from company. Powerful good horse he is, an' no mistake, an' I reckon his rider's been on the prairie afore this trip. Don't seem to be doin' much in the way of work. Think he said he had left some of his company on the road, and I reckon he's waiting for 'em to come on, afore he lays out a claim. I sorter reckon, from the way he crosses a horse, he knows more 'bout running cattle than he does handlin' a pick."

From the easy, steady way in which the fellow ran on, I think he would have talked for an hour, and, as I was anxious to get away, I thanked him and rode off.

"Look out, young one," he called out, "there's some rough ridin' 'tween here and there. Dern little road and nary a gaslight on it. Good chance for a fall, lessn your horses is mulé-footed and owl-eyed to boot."

It was rough riding, and no mistake! Rocks big and little, and lying every way except smoothly, plenty of stumps, and not a few holes, and nothing but starlight to make them out by; it was worse than an abandoned dog town on the plains. At last, after not a few crooks and turns, we made our way nearly to the light, and I gave the whistle we used on the Trail. Capt. Dick's whistle answered it, and he came tumbling out of the tent with a whoop.

"By George, Charley, I'm a heap gladder to see you than if I had struck it rich! Are you all right, young one?"

"Sound as the little white bull, Capt. Dick, but hungry as a coyote."

"Oh, well, I'll soon get you over that. Are you all sittin', Nasho?"

"Me all right, Capt. Dick."

"Cracklins, you woolly-headed pan-sopper, hurry up and get these young ones some supper. Is there any cold bread?"

"Yes, Massa Dick, I sorter 'lowed maybe Massa Charley and Nasho wud come in ter night, and made my dinner offn pork and beans."

"You saved the bread, did you? How did you expect to have room for bread after putting away a potful of beans? Get some ham and eggs and coffee, and lay yourself out on it, too. Put my name in the pot; Charley's coming has made me hungry."

"No wonder, Massa Dick. You staid up town till four clock, 'thout any dinner, and den you did n't eat but five biscuits an' the res' ob dat venison ham, and a quart ob coffee. You's been off your grub de las' two or tree days. Feels sorter hongry myself, Massa Dick."

"Get supper for these young ones in a hurry, and then you may stuff yourself like a flour sack, if you want to."

We had been working while the talking was going on, and soon had our horses unsaddled, their backs

rubbed off, and a good feed of oats in the feed-trough for them. There was a general neighing between Beelzebub, Comanche, and Spot, but our horses were hungry, and soon got over that, and settled down to their feed.

"Hay's mighty scarce here, Charley," said Capt. Dick, as he brought up a couple of bundles, "and costs like can fruit in the Nation. The stock's been living mostly, as to roughness, on what they got on the plains, but they ain't suffered any. Hello, Rover, old dog! glad to see you, old fellow. I've been sleeping with one eye open for fear some good judge of horse-flesh should carry Beelzebub off for a good look at him by daylight, where there would n't be anybody to interrupt him. I'll turn part of that business over to you, and be sure you don't go to sleep over it. There's a venison bone in here that will just about fit your mouth, old fellow; let's go and find it."

By the time we had had a good wash and comb, and straightened ourselves out, Cracklins had supper ready for us, and we were all soon gathered round the mess table.

"Try the *wuevas*, Charley; you too, Nasho. I happened to be at a store the other evening when a lot came in, and levied on a few dozen. I knew you boys were death on eggs, and I can keep a dozen hens in steady work myself."

"What do you have to pay for them, Capt. Dick?"

"Six bits a dozen; cheap, that. Have paid that

much at Salina, and twice that up in Idaho, but I did n't get more than one good feed of 'em. Reckon we would n't eat them so free here, if it had n't been for the cats."

"How did you get along with the cats, Capt. Dick?"

"The bulliest kind. Them Rackensack mule-whackers were good ones, and no mistake. Only lost one on the road; crawled through where a slat had come loose, and lit out for a ranch of his own in the mountains. No more staying on a mule train for that Thomas. Reckon he'll get lonesome out there by himself. You ought to have seen the sight when we got in, Charley. Rolled up about two o'clock Saturday evening. Lots of men had struck work for the week, and town was pretty full. It was n't five minutes till I had a crowd, and I could n't sell out fast enough, with the Rackensackers to help me. Dernd if they did n't seem plum hungry for cats. Lots of 'em would give anything we'd ask, though a good many of them did n't want to pay any more for their cat meat than they could help. Took the cat fever myself, and got proud, like the rest, and kept the Maltese for ourselves. A sport who had had a streak of luck offered me a hundred dollars for her, but that cat was n't in the market at no figure. The tortoise-shells brought fifty apiece as easy as swallowing hulled grapes. I tell you we had lively work jerking off the slats, handing out cats, and taking in the dust. Had to hire three men — one apiece —

to do the weighing for us. By sundown dern the hair was there left, except on the Maltese, and I had the dust for all but one. One poor fellow, who looked like he 'd been in the rain for a week without a blanket, asked me if I would n't let him have one on credit. Said he was going it alone, and got powerful lonesome at night, his gulch being clean out on the outskirts, and he 'd be sure to pay me as soon as he struck pay dirt. I took a fancy to the fellow's face, told him to pitch in and pick out his music-bag, and then go up and lay by over Sunday with me, and he 'd be in better fix for a fresh start Monday. From the way he went for the grub, I reckon he had been having pretty hard lines of it. Rather seemed to enjoy himself, layin' around and smoking, and when he left us Monday he stepped out a sight livelier than when he came up on Saturday. When I got through weighing up and counting up that night, I calculated we were just twenty-three hundred and seventy-eight dollars and seventy-five cents clear gainers on that speculation, and I reckon that 's more than we could have made in the same time at either handling bulls or gold-grabbing. When the Rackensackers were ready to pull out Monday morning, I handed them fifty dollars apiece extra. They had been A No. 1 hands, and I reckon, if ever we should happen to want them again, we won't have much trouble in getting them. I calculated we would fob a thousand apiece, and the odd change we 'd make an all-round pot of for tobacco and fancy groceries, and anything

we might take a fancy to. Does that suit, Charley?"

"Exactly, Capt. Dick. You've had the big end of the trouble with them, though."

"Mighty little trouble once we got them on wheels. A bully good idea that was of yours. I'd like to go into another such a speculation, when we get through here. I have n't caught the gold-grabbing fever bad enough yet to make me want ice-water. There's a sight more rock than gold grubbed out of these hills, and there's many a hole that had a good many dollars put into it, that has n't let out a color."

"What do you think of the mines, Capt. Dick?"

"I'm mighty glad, Charley, we did n't come here to dig like the rest. It ain't near equal to bull-driving for a steady thing. Four darkies took seventeen hundred dollars out of Nigger Gulch in one day with nothing but a rocker, and had to carry all their water by hand nearly a quarter of a mile, but one steer selling at seventy-five dollars don't make the herd average thirty by a long ways. That gulch was a good one, though. More than a hundred thousand dollars have come out of it, and miners have been offering five hundred dollars a day for enough water to keep their sluices going steady. It ain't much of a place for placer mining, and that's the only kind that gives the man who drives his own pick any chance. Water is scarce, too, and you can't mine to count, without plenty of wash water. I have n't seen any mill yet that has been left, so I

reckon men that own them are either making some money with 'em, or living in hopes of doing it. The road agents have been pretty dernd active, and I reckon they've made it pay better than most miners. The officers jerked up three or four of 'em the other day in a corral, put a good deal of jewelry on them, and took 'em to Cheyenne, and I reckon that'll rather discourage the rest of the gang, as there seem to be several people ready to swear that they are the very chaps that lifted their purses, and the killing of a stage-driver lies between some of them. The express company have got to playing it old on 'em too; put the dust in an iron box, and rivet that hard and fast to the coach-bottom. It takes a good deal of time to work at it, and travellers likely to come up any minute. All things considered, I reckon the road agents will be looking for new ground in which to pitch their next crop."

"How about the Indians, Capt. Dick?"

"They've just kept my hair nearly standing on end on your account, Charley. If I had believed one tenth I've heard, I'd just left this outfit and took the back track to where I left you. I reckon there ain't any doubt about their having been pretty bad, and they lack a sight of being good now, but Crook and Miles and Terry are after them pretty lively, and it's only the straggling ones that hang around here watching for a chance to give anybody they can happen upon a first-class specimen of a Sioux shave. Every few days, in fact mighty near every day, some

body comes in, and sometimes a bunch of 'em, and says Indians are too plenty out their way to make gold hunting healthy. We've just heard of a considerable row between a lot of prospectors and about five hundred Injuns, — that 's the news, — but I throwed off about two hundred Injuns to make swallowing the rest easier, out on the little Missouri, about a hundred and sixty miles from here. The men dug rifle-pits, and the red-skins came at them in regular army style about three o'clock in the evening, and kept it up until eight. Took turns at it. Did some pretty fair shooting. Out of thirty head of horses they did n't leave but one old jack and two horses of an old customer that had beat the rest caching his riding stock. The men must have laid low, as there was n't but one killed. About ten o'clock it turned cloudy and hid the moon, and the party packed up and made good horse-time in with Dick King in the lead; at least I call a hundred and sixty miles in sixty hours fair horse travelling, — a good deal fairer than I want for a steady diet. Old Joe Dyer, whoever he may happen to be, has been run in with a crowd he was piloting to the Big Horn. They brought in four dead men, and left one where the Injuns had laid him out. Seems like somebody is getting killed nearly every day, but they get tired here, and keep piling out, and, from accounts, the Wind River and Big Horn Mountains must be getting pretty well rounded up by this time. If any body has struck it anyways extra rich over there,

he's been smart enough not to start a paper to let it be known, or send any couriers over this way with the news. The officers what run this shebang—county commissioners, I believe they call 'em—have offered two hundred and fifty dollars a head for Injuns dead or alive found inside the county, and a lot of fellows that had been hunting for a living took a notion there was more money in hunting Injuns than deer and elk. From the best I can learn, the Injuns mixed it pretty even with 'em, and, on the whole, come out in the lead."

"Are provisions high?"

"Don't be scared 'bout the grub, Charley. Grub ain't as high as cats, nor as scarce, though I've been where a man could get more eating for less money. I had a good laugh at a New York dandy that had just got in on the coach the day before. Reckon he did n't like the feed at his sleeping ranch, so he comes round to the hash factory, and calls for mushroom on toast.

"'Wha-a-at?' says the breastpin chap behind the counter, as if he had understood his customer to call for boiled Chinaman on a shutter, but was n't sure.

"'Bring me a dish of mushroom on toast, and look lively about it, too.'

"'Look here, mister, no reflections on this house is allowed while I'm behind her counter. Hash and inguns is what you'll take.'

"And he reached for his six-shooter, so as to make sure the fellow would understand him. I reckon he

did, too, for he cleaned up a big plate and called for more, but I'll bet my boots he's in Cheyenne by this time, bound East on hurrying business. You can get pretty fair hash for ten dollars a week, and they'll sleep you for six more, or you can get a single meal for fifty cents, and rising. If you want to do your own cooking, you can lay in flour at twelve dollars a sack, hundred pounders; bacon at a quarter a pound; fresh meat at from fifteen to thirty cents a pound; butter at from fifty to seventy-five cents a pound; and paddy potatoes at five pounds to the dollar, and no extra charge for what's sprouted or rotten. It's bear meat I'm wanting, and I've got one of the professional hunters looking out for some, but I'm not making myself hungry in hopes of his coming. If the bear gets the first squint of his ugly mug, that fellow will never get near enough for a shot. Whe-ew! I'm plum talked out, Charley. I've been unloading my gas to give you a good chance to corral your supper, and I think you've had a fair round up. Crawl down on that buffalo and let's hear what happened to you while you've been playin' nurse to a sick Injun. I have my doubts about that ever having been done before in these diggings. You can take the pot, Cracklins."

"What good de pot gwine ter do me, Massa Dick? Dere ain't nutin in it but de outside ob de bott'm. I'se lookin' ebery day for you to scrape clean fru it. You goes fur de bott'm like dere had n't been no top, and dat arter I done filled de pan plum full and built a manchac rufe on hit."

"Don't you know where the grub sacks are, you old sinner?"

"Dat I does, Massa Dick, and dat ain't all; dere's gwine ter be less ob dat grub and more ob dis cook in dis camp mity quick, I tell you. I'm so glad Mas Charley's got back safe, I feels like I kin ete a bushel."

I gave Capt. Dick an account of our stay at the camp. When I told him about the Pawnees leaving, he clapped me on the shoulder and said, —

"Bully for you, Charley! I have n't any particular love for that Blackfoot horse thief, but I'd seen the whole Pawnee tribe — before I'd 'a' given him up."

Then I told him about the family that had been killed by the Indians, and our burying them. He drew a long breath when I had got through, and said, —

"Well, Charley, I'm mighty well satisfied the way it has turned out, but I wouldn't do it again for the best mine in the diggin's. You've been in luck clean through. We'll see if the same luck will follow us to-morrow, when we come to hunt for that buried money. We'll tie the horses to the wagon-wheels to-night, make our bed under it, and go in for a square sleep. Let's get ready to bunk."

"Well, Massa Dick," put in Cracklins, with a mouth full of meat, "dis beats anyting eber I heerd ob. When Mas Charley fust begun to talk 'bout buyin' up a wagon load ob cats fur ter haul ter de mines, I tout to myself dat little Mas Charley's got powerful good head on he shoulders, but he ain't nutin but a boy, and boys iz mity foolish wid deir

notions sometimes. When Massa Dick said he 'd go inter dat cat speklashun, I says ter myself, 'Dis yer camp gwine crazy, shore.' An' when we comd off an' lef Mas Charley and Nasho back dere in de mountains fur ter wait on a dernd Ingin dat would knock em bofe on de hed ef he got a chance, an' wuz shore to sit up ob nites lookin' fur one, I wuz so plum up-sot, dat I did n't ete but two pones ob bread fur dinner dat day. An' now dat de cats iz dun sold fur big money, an' Mass Charley's cum back all rite, I jess feels like dey ain't nutin too foolish fur you and 'Mas Charley ter gwine inter, and shore ter cum out at de big end ob de horn.'"

CHAPTER XXII.

STUDYING DIRECTIONS. FOLLOWING UP THE TRAIL.
THREE POINTS MADE, AND A DEAD HALT. THE
LANDMARK GONE. CHARLEY TAKES A CAREFUL
STUDY OVER IT. BURIED UNDER A LAND-SLIDE.

WE were busy with the horses next morning until breakfast, but, as soon as that was over, I took out the sketch of the place where the money was buried, and we examined it carefully and read the directions. I had carried it wrapped up in a piece of oilskin in a thin belt which I wore around my waist, over my under-shirt. I could not lose it ; it was impossible for any one to get it without overpowering me, or cutting my clothes off of me while asleep, — something I think would be hard to do without awaking me, and if I was killed in any way, it would have been found on my body. The sketch was a very rough one, and the directions ran thus : —

“Start at the old crossing of Deadwood Gulch take down the middle of the creek bed, five hundred and sixty-five steps, turn square east eighty-three steps to a big shelving rock, stand on that rock, look due west through a break in a big rock on top of the

divide, like the hind sight of a rifle, to a big pine on the hillside, with no branches except a little bushy top, turn square north seventy-seven steps to the mouth of a dry *coulé* with a mountain ash growing over it, and dig three feet through dirt and rubble to a pot-hole in the rock."

"Those directions ain't as good as a blazed trail. How far five hundred and seventy-five steps will take us, will depend a good deal on the length of the legs of the man that does the stepping, and how he is in the way of slinging 'em. What sized man was Mr. Lenton?"

"Not quite as tall as you, Capt. Dick, but a little heavier set."

"Then it's likely we'd step pretty much the same. Stocking a saddle all the time ought to spread a fellow's legs and make him step farther, but it don't; at least cavalry never get over the ground like infantry when they are dismounted. Walking seems to come awkward to 'em, and they don't make much headway at it. Cracklins is about the right figure for it, but I never saw a darky in my life that could step fifty yards, and then go back and step it over again, without missing it at least three yards every time he tried it. There ain't many white men can do it, as to that matter. Most men will form their idea of how far so many steps will take them, and then, without knowing it, they will try to fit their steps to that distance, particularly towards the last, when they see how they are going to miss it. Let's

go for a trial at it. I happen to know where the old crossing is. Heard a lot of fellows at the Rosebud Saloon — Jeems's River, what mean whiskey they keep there! — talking about the first diggin's at Deadwood one day. They had a dispute about where the first grocery was put up, and went to the place to settle it, and in settling that they had to settle where the first crossing was. Thinking it might be as well to learn all I could about the lay of the land, I went with them. They could n't agree about the crossing, so they hunted up one of the early comers and left it to him, and he went down and showed it to 'em, and stirred out an old pard that backed him. Then it was drinks all round, and that night I was nearly dead with the headache. It ought to have killed me, for drinking such stuff."

Leaving Cracklins and Nasho to take care of camp, Capt. Dick and I went to the old crossing. There our first trouble began. The road in the crossing was twenty-five feet wide. Should we take the upper, the lower edge, or the middle, for a beginning?

"These diggings had n't been opened long when Mr. Lenton was here; and my notion is, this road was n't near as big then as it is now. You see up there on that shelf, it ain't more than ten feet wide now. Following that width down with the general slant of the road, would bring the lower edge about here, and it's my notion here's about the right place for a start. He would be a good deal more apt to start from the lower edge to run south. If he had

been going north, he'd have started from the upper edge."

"Yes, Capt. Dick; I think you are right about it."

"Well, Charley, don't say a word to me until I get through. The least thing will make a fellow change his step and bring him out all wrong. If you think I go wrong, or change step, calculate as nearly as you can how much difference it will make at the outcome. Keep a careful count of my steps, for a fellow is mighty apt to forget or miscount, and I ain't so fond of wading creeks as to want to do this job three or four times."

"Would n't it be a good idea for you to call the number every fifty steps? Then we can tell if we keep count together."

"I'll do that, Charley, but don't say anything unless you don't agree with my count. I ain't a surveyor, and I'll be mighty easy put out in this business."

I don't know whether counting cattle so often together had anything to do with it or not, but we came out exactly together when Capt. Dick stopped. The place where he stopped was dry, so he marked it with a rock, and then placed one on each bank, just opposite it.

"Well, Charley, what do you make it?"

"Five hundred and sixty-five."

"I reckon the count's right. How about the steps?"

"I think they were very even; but once you went

to the left of a big rock in the way, when to the right would have been the nearest, and once you went round a hole of water."

"You did n't think I was going in head and ears, did you?"

"I don't think it was over waist deep, and I reckon a miner on a distance step would n't have stopped for that."

"I ain't a miner, and it looked too deep for me to go bulging into it. How much difference do you think the two made?"

"About four steps and a half each."

"Oh, well, that won't make much difference in the outcome in the clear. If it was in shinoak brush, where you could n't see a yard, it would be different. What I want to know is, how much a step up a hillside, as steep as a Dutch roof and rockier than Llano County, is, and how a man is going to keep anyways near an average step?"

"I reckon you'd make about an average step with Mr. Lenton."

"He was used to rock climbing, and I ain't. Bet I do some lofty, backward circus tumbling, and break my neck."

He started up, and I followed him as best I could, keeping count. I fell down twice, but I did n't lose that.

"What do you make it?" called Capt. Dick, when he stopped, almost breathless.

"Eighty-three."

We both sat down and panted a little. I was the first to look about, and, seeing a big shelving rock about ten steps north and three steps west of us, I pointed it out to Capt. Dick.

"That's it, I reckon, Charley. I hope so, any how, for a little of this climbing goes a long way with me."

We went to it, and Capt. Dick climbed up and stood on top. He took a long, careful look, and then turned to me with a disappointed face.

"Yonder is the rock with the rifle sights; there is no mistaking that, a regular buckhorn sight, but I can't catch on any pine-tree by squinting through it. Try your sight, Charley; though I don't believe you are high enough to level it."

"No, Capt. Dick, I could n't see anything but the top of one, if there was one there; and, if it grew in a hollow, I could n't see that, even."

Capt. Dick took another long, careful look.

"It ain't there, Charley; I'm too used to looking for cattle on the prairie to miss a pine-tree on a hill-side; particularly when I have a pair of sights to squint through. Besides, that direction would take us just over that little ridge behind our camp. You see we are near about opposite camp now. Now I've been on top of that ridge several times, and I have n't noticed any big pine-tree, and I'd 'a' been most sure to have seen it if it had been there. There's been a sight of timber cut off of these hills, and I reckon that one went with many another."

"Then the stump ought to be there."

"It won't take us long to find out. There's no use of marking this place if we have to try back. This rock is sign-post enough."

We were soon at the rock, with the rifle sights. Taking the exact direction from the shelving rock, Capt. Dick looked through the sight again. From the shelving rock it had not seemed a great deal larger than a coarse gun sight, but close to it, as Capt. Dick said, it was like taking sight through an ox-bow.

"Yonder is the stump, sure enough. It is a big one, and stands by itself. We're in luck, so far."

In a few moments we were at the stump. After a careful look all around, we turned to each other at the same instant.

"By George, Charley, we are clean beat at last. There ain't any dry *coulé* about it, and I reckon nobody has carried that off. Here's the stump, and the top of the pine, showing, as plain as can be, that it was here; but there ain't the least sign of there ever having been any *coulé* there where it ought to be, by the directions. We started right, and we've plummed the directions, and they've brought us to the landmarks called for every time so far, but they've played out here, certain."

We both sat down, and took a long, careful look and study over it. I tell you I felt pretty badly over it. Capt. Dick had come entirely on my account, and the idea of making all this trip for nothing was

anything but pleasant to me. I thought it all over very carefully. Mr. Lenton could have had no object in making up such a story on his dying bed. Besides, from his face, he was n't the man to do a thing of that kind. Could he have been out of his senses so much that he did not know what he was doing? If this was so, he might never have had any money at all. Many men, whose thoughts have run on getting money, have fancied that they had money buried, or knew where money had been buried, and, in the delirium of fever, have told very straight tales about it, that did not have a word of truth in them. This might have been the case with him. He was only sensible a short time. He was not really sensible then, but only seemed so to us, and what was the fancy of delirium, we had taken for a true statement. I went back, in imagination, to his bedside. I recalled his looks and actions. It was impossible. He must have been in his right senses. The minister thought so, and so did the lawyer. We could not all have been deceived. If I had been alone with him, I should have believed just as strongly that he was in his right senses. I could not recall his look and words as he charged me to deal fairly with little Marion, and believe otherwise. His story was true.

We must, then, have been mistaken about some of the bearings. I went back again. We had started at the crossing of Deadwood Gulch. About the right gulch there could be no mistake. I had no doubt Capt.

Dick had found, through the first-comers, the original. We had tallied so exactly in our count of the distance, that I felt sure we were right about that. Might not the gulch have changed its course? That was not likely. When water starts down hill it takes the easiest cut, and, once it gets a channel made, it is not apt to leave it. A new channel could not have been cut in that short time. The distance and direction from our stopping-point in the creek bed to the shelving rock corresponded so closely to our directions, that I felt certain we had been right there. There was no other rock of that description about. About the rock with the rifle sight, it was almost impossible to be mistaken. It was not likely there was another like it in the Hills. I turned, and looked over the ground across which we had come very carefully. There was no other pine-tree within the range that corresponded to the directions as did this one, by whose stump we were sitting. It must be the one. I took another careful look southward. Ha! I think I have it.

“Well, Charley, I’m plum beat. I reckon Mr. Lenton did n’t make up any yarn to play off on you. It ain’t likely that a man who knew his time had come would have done that. This sketch, and these directions, were made most certainly when he buried his money. They were right then, and they are bound to be right now. Well, we followed ’em, and followed ’em right, too. I’m certain about that, and besides, they brought us to the landmarks they called

for every time. So far it was all right ; but here, where there ought to be a dry-*coulé*, there ain't the sign of one. The tree has been carried away. No doubt about that. Most likely it is a shaft in some mine over yonder now, for it was one of the biggest ones in the diggings. But they couldn't have carried away the *coulé*. If it had been here then it would be bound to be here now. It ain't here, and that's what beats me. I've felt pretty badly beat on the Trail several times, and I've followed up some pretty cold trails, but I never was beat like this before, and this trail has run clean aground. I'm mighty sorry, on your account, Charley, because I counted pretty certainly on getting that money, and it would have given you a right pretty start. It would have laid you in a thousand head of good cattle, and enough left for a cabin and corrals in some good range, and all you would have had to do would be to stick to 'em close, and in ten years you would have been well off,—more cattle than you could shake a stick at, and a pocket full of spondulicks all the time. Well ! I reckon we ain't out anything, and that cat speculation panned out rich, considering the money we put into it. We may get to handle two or three little bunches of cattle before it's time to take the back trail for Texas, and if we have good luck we'll come out right yet, and nobody any the wiser for the fool's errand we've come on. No use crying over spilt milk, Charley ! ”

“I am not thinking about myself, Capt. Dick. I

was more anxious to get this money, so tha. Miss Marion might have her share, than on my own account. I can work and take care of myself, but it's hard on a lady who has nobody to look to, and who has always had plenty furnished her without even the asking for it. I ain't ready to give this up yet, though. Would n't it be better to find some miner who was here among the first, tell him all about it, and offer him half our share to find it?"

"Of course it would. I don't know what I was about that I did n't think of that. That's the idea, exactly."

"Well, Capt. Dick, we would n't ask anybody to help us follow a cattle trail after a stampede."

"I reckon, if we could n't do that job, there would n't be any use in anybody else trying it."

"Our eyes and heads ought to be as good here as they are in the prairie."

"There's a heap in anybody going at his own business. Mining ain't been in our line, Charley."

"It's finding the place to mine we want, and hunting cattle-placers and following cattle trails has been exactly in our line. We've got directions to go by, and that's all we could give any miner, and, to my notion, we ought to be able to follow them as well as he could."

"That's so for a fact. But, to save my soul, I don't see where we've made any mistake."

"I don't think we have made any."

"Then where the devil is that *coulé*?"

"Where is the pine-tree?"

"That 's been carried off; plain enough about that, but they could n't have carried off a water-course."

"But they might have covered it up."

"By George, I had never thought of that!"

He looked all around carefully, but quickly.

"That won't work, Charley. There has n't been any mining done about here, else the sign would have been here."

"Capt. Dick, where are your eyes? Don't you see the ravine there that the *coulé* ran into?"

"Here 's one end of it, sure enough. Curious, by George! It has n't got any head. It 's cut square off, like a hill had been moved and set down right across it and covered it up."

"That 's it, exactly."

"But where did the hill come from, and how came it here?"

"Look yonder!"

I pointed up the hillside to a bluff that looked as square cut and fresh as a fresh wash.

"Hurrah for you, Charley!" cried Capt. Dick, jumping up and swinging his hat over his head.

"Bully for my young bullwhacker. *The coulé is buried under that land-slide.*"

CHAPTER XXIII.

LAYING OUT THE DIGGING. DIVISION OF WORK. A BARGAIN WITH CRACKLINS. CHARLEY PUT ON GUARD. HE DOES NOT LIKE HIS WORK. AN IMPORTANT POSITION. THE NIGHT-GUARDS.

THAT only lets us out of one trouble to get us into another."

"That's so, Charley. Knowing the *coulé* is there, ain't finding it, by a good deal. No telling how much dirt there is on top of it."

"We can get at that pretty nearly from the height the dirt is piled in that ravine, because the mouth of the *coulé* must have been nearly on a level with the ravine. How to find exactly where the mouth is, is what troubles me. If we don't hit exactly, we will have all our work for nothing."

"I'm not bothering myself much about that. It's there, and a little more work won't count for much when we get at it. We've hit the other distances so nearly that we ain't apt to go far wrong on this."

"Two or three steps *under ground* makes a big difference, when you have to dig through twelve or fifteen feet of dirt. It is like digging a well twelve or fifteen feet in diameter, instead of four or five."

“Well, there ain’t but one way to get at it, and that’s by digging. Let’s fix the spot as near as we can and get to work. I ain’t much on swinging a pick or handling a spade, but I am counting on getting in a few licks there. Cracklins has been laying up, stuffing himself and sleeping: I am calculating on his earning his rations and wages at sinking this hole.”

Capt. Dick stepped the distance off very carefully, and we marked the spot.

“Look here, Charley! These directions call for seventy-seven steps, part of it down a slant, and ours is pretty much on a level. How are we going to get at the difference?”

“I think there is a way to work that by algebra, but I don’t happen to know how to do it. The nearest way to get at it, that I can see, is this: we can form a pretty good idea from the direction of that ravine before it is covered up by the land-slide, and afterwards, of the course it has under it. From the course of the *coulé* we can form a pretty good idea of where it must have run into the ravine, and right where the two come together, of course, is our spot.”

“That will take some pretty judgmatical guessing, but, as you say, I don’t see any other way to get at it.”

Taking the bearing of the ravine on both sides of the land-slide, we traced its course, or what we thought most likely to be its course, under the slide.

Doing the same thing by the *coulé*, we fixed, as nearly as possible, the spot where its course ran across that of the ravine. That, of course, would be its mouth, and there was our place to dig.

By this time it was noon ; so, carefully marking the spot, we returned to camp for dinner.

As soon as it was over, Capt. Dick said, —

“Cracklins, we have been going along without any special agreement, because we have had very little to do. Charley and I have a notion that there is money to be got by digging here, and we are going to try it. We ain’t either one much on handling a pick or spade, and we want somebody to dig for us who is able and willing to do good work. We may make, and we may lose, — that’s our lookout ; but we expect to pay whoever we get, whether we make or not. Do you want a lay of that kind ?”

“Lors a massey, Massa Dick, I ain’t nebber been trubble my kinky hed ’bout no lay ob no kind. I ain’t got no home, an’ nobody pretickler fur ter car’ for me, an’ I knows nobody ain’t gwine ter do no better by me dan you an’ Mas Charley. I jess ’lows ter stay wid yer ez long as you lets me, widout trubblin’ myself ’bout no lay ob no kind.”

“Digging for gold is a heap harder work than cooking on the Trail ; and we expect whoever we get to work.”

“Massa Dick, you talks like I did n’t know nutin ’bout work. I wuz raised in de field wha a han’ had ter do a full day’s work, or ketch de debbil frum de

oberseer. I don't pertend to be so powerful fond ob work ez sum niggers, but I'm reddy ter sot in fur you and Mas Charley, wheneber you sez de word, an' you'll see ef Cracklins don't make de pick an' spade git fru de ground."

"How much do you want a month, with your grub?"

"Lors, Massa Dick, I ain't noways onesy 'bout dat. Ef I finds de dust, you kin gib me whateber you likes, an' if I don't, I don't want nutin. You tuk me up when you did n't hab no use fur me, an' treated me ez good ez if I hed bin a regler han', an' I haint furgot it."

"No, Cracklins, I am not going into this thing that way. We will give you fifty dollars a month and your board; you to dig, or cook, or do anything we want. Of course we don't expect you to do more than a fair day's work. If we find anything, it is ours. If we don't, it is our loss. You will get your money all the same."

"I'm plum satisfied wid dat, Massa Dick. I iz to stay wid you like I'se been doing, ain't I?"

"Of course. Why?"

"Cos you mentioned 'bout de grub, an' nebber sed nutin 'bout de sleepin', an' I tout maybe I waant ter stay in camp arter de day's work wuz dun."

"You have your blankets; and if it gets colder, and you need more, we'll give them to you. This is hard work on the clothes; wears them out mighty fast; so we'll give you a better suit, when you get through, than the one you've got on. You just

make us as good a hand at this as you have on the Trail, and you won't have any reason to complain of us."

"I'm plum sartin 'bout dat, Massa Dick."

Capt. Dick put down a stake at the spot we had marked out. Tying a string four feet long to it, he fastened the end of it to a small stick, and made a circle with it, by going round the stake at the end of the string. This made his circle eight feet in diameter; that is, eight feet across. Taking a spade, he cut out a spade of dirt all the way around the circle, taking it from the inside. Then Cracklins took the pick and went to work. We had two picks, two spades, and a long handled shovel. As soon as Cracklins had loosed a lot of earth with the pick, Capt. Dick and I would take the spade and throw it out, so as to rest him. Nasho helped me.

Next morning, while we were eating, Capt. Dick said, —

"Look here, Charley, it won't begin to do for us to leave camp as we did yesterday. Somebody will come along and gobble up our horses, and anything about camp they may take a fancy to, and we never know anything of it. There is another thing, too, we have got to look out for; we are off here on the outskirts, and, while we are busy with our work, some Indians on the lookout could slip up behind that divide yonder, and pick us off like shooting beeves in a corral. There is no place for camp where we are at work, but we must move closer to it, and you and Nasho must

take care of camp, do the cooking, and look out for Indians, while Cracklins and I do the digging."

"I don't like that, Capt. Dick, because it looks like we will be laying around while you are hard at work. I think I can take care of camp and help you some, too."

"You need n't be afraid about the work. I am not going to hurt myself at that, and you and Nasho will find your hands full. The horses and mules must have a chance to graze, and I had rather herd five hundred head of bulls on the prairie than our stock here among these ravines. Lose sight of a mule five minutes, and he sneaks off somewhere where it takes you two hours to find him. If the Indians come at all, they will come from behind that divide on the other side of where the land-slide started, and, as far as I am concerned, I had rather watch for them a month to keep them from coming, than fight them two hours after they have come. I will be perfectly satisfied if you or Nasho will stay up there and keep watch, if you don't do anything else. Whoever keeps camp can do the cooking and look after the horses."

"I don't like seeming to be lazy, and having a soft thing while others are at work ; but just as you say. What shall I do, Capt. Dick ?"

"You had better take the watch, and let Nasho look after the stock and cook. About meal-time, when he is busy, you can keep an eye on them, and help him that way. There is a place over near that pine-tree that will do for camp. We'll move there

after breakfast. It's mighty rough, and down-hilly, but it will do for a few days, and, if we have good luck, we won't be here long."

As soon as breakfast was over, Cracklins went to work, and we moved camp over near the big pine stump. As Capt. Dick said, it was rough and down-hilly, but it was handy to our work, and would do for a few days. The mules were hobbled out, and the horses turned loose to graze, except one. We made it a rule always to keep one tied up ready, if the other stock should take a scare or stray away. We was n't afraid of either Beelzebub or Comanche or Spot leaving camp, but it is best to be on the safe side. We made them take it turn about to be tied up.

I took my rifle and went up on the divide. The country near us was very rough and hilly, but I did n't think any Indian could get in shot of me if I kept my eyes open. Standing guard is always tiresome work where there is nothing to see. You get tired of looking at the same things over and over again, and think there ain't any real danger, and then you are so apt to get careless. I had a first-rate little spy-glass with me, and I got a good deal of amusement out of that. There was a big elm on top of the ridge, and, by climbing that, with my glass, I could cover a good deal of country. Here and there I could see men in groups of twos and threes, digging and carrying dirt to the water and washing it. I looked very carefully for game, but not a head of any kind could I see. It has been hunted so much that it has

been driven farther off. I am not likely to have much use for my rifles while we stay here. Now and then I went over to Nasho and the horses, but I always took a very careful look before starting, to be sure no Indian was lurking about, watching for a chance to steal up and do some mischief. I would n't mind standing guard at all if I thought anything would ever come of it. I have no idea I shall see an Indian while we are here, and I don't like staying up here doing nothing, while the rest are at work. I know nobody knows when to look for Indians, and that they are very apt to come when they are least expected, and it is life and death if they do come; but if I was boss I don't believe I would stay here. I would take the risks. But, as I am not boss, it is my business to obey orders, and I am going to do it whether I like it or not. I wish I could put some steam power into Cracklins, so he would hurry up and get through. I am tired now, and what will it be when I've been at it a week or ten days? To make sure of them, I drove the horses in sight of camp at noon. I am a great deal more afraid of some mean white man stealing them than of the Indians getting them.

"Well, Charley," said Capt. Dick, as we were sitting around our little mess-table, "how do you like standing Indian guard?"

"I don't like it at all, Capt. Dick. It is so lonesome."

"That is a curious complaint to come from a boy

that has herded cattle as much as you have. That 's mostly the way, though. Boys like it at first, because it is new, but that wears off, and they get tired and want to quit."

"It ain't so much that, Capt. Dick. If I had started to go to Oregon with cattle, I don't think I would want to back out. But it seems like such a lazy way of spending time, while the rest are at work."

"And doing twice as much work as they would do if you was n't up there on the watch. People in a hole can't watch to do much good, and nothing keeps a man so uneasy as not to be able to see about him. He can't half work. I reckon Nasho feels a heap safer stooping over his pots and dishes, because he knows a pair of sharp eyes are between him and the Indians. Lots of burnt victuals we'd get but for that. And you save half the feed of our stock, too. You may bet your bottom dollar I would n't trust Beelzebub out of my sight if you was n't on the watch. If the stock had to stand by their halters all the time, they would have to be fed more hay, and that costs like blazes up here. And they would n't do near as well then as they will with the grass they get. That is the most important work of our camp, and I put you there because I knew you would stay there and keep your eyes skinned. I have no doubt I could go down into the camps and hire a man that would be glad to come and stand guard for a dollar a day and his feed, but I'd be afraid, all the time, that if he did n't walk off with our horses himself he would go

to sleep and let somebody else do it. Don't you be uneasy about not doing any work. There ain't one of us will have earned his share, if we find it, more than you."

"I can do two hands' share of guard at night, anyhow."

"No you don't, Charley; a boy needs sleep worse than a man, and if he don't get it one time he is very apt to take it another, whether he wants to or not. Sitting out there on the rocks is duller and more sleepy work than herding. I'd trust you just as quick and just as far as anybody. The fact is, I don't intend to keep any guard at night. Here are three of us used to sleeping with one eye open and ready to jump at a sound. We've got two horses that are better sentinels than half of Uncle Sam's boys in blue. I don't think any Indian is going to get near Beelzebub or Comanche without their knowing it, and they will be very sure to make noise enough for us to hear it when they scent one, if we don't sleep like logs. More than that and better than that, here's Rover, and I'll just stake my ears that no stranger, red-skin, white man, Chinaman, or any other colored thief, comes about this camp without his knowing it, and speaking his knowledge out plain to boot. Ain't that so, Rover?"

Rover looked up, wagged his tail, and took a look all around, sniffing the air as he moved his head, as much as to say he was on the watch. Capt. Dick threw him a piece of meat, which he caught and

swallowed, and then dropped his head between his paws again. A dog looks like he is asleep when he is doing that, but, if he is a good watch-dog, nobody can come about without his knowing it. His head being so close to the ground, he can hear better.

"How are you getting on Capt. Dick?"

"Better than I expected. There ain't as much rock as I expected to find; at least we haven't struck it yet, and the digging is easier than I thought it would be. It's hard enough, though, and slow enough, too; ain't it, Cracklins?"

"Mas Dick, you 'se all de time in too much hurry. On de Trail, you would n't let us hurry de cattle, kase you said it would make 'em pore, an' you 'd ruther be longer 'bout it an' git 'em dere in good fix, dan to hurry up an' run de fat offn 'em. Now dis nigger wants fur to git fru too, but ef you jiss lets him strike a slow, steady lick, he'll lass a heap longer an' git fru quicker in de end, dan ef you hurry him out of breff."

"I reckon your head's level there, Cracklins. I am in a hurry, and I can't well help it. We've got to go over to the Big Horn country when we get through here, and winter will be here before we know it. I wintered up in this country once, and I ain't going to do it any more if it can be helped. If we don't get through over there in the Big Horn or Wind River mountains by winter, there won't be anything for us to do but to cut and run, and get out while we can. It ain't any use to talk about mining over

there in winter. Everything is snowed up deeper than a buffalo buried in a Platte quicksand. Then there is work to be done at the ranch this fall and winter, to get ready for the spring drive. I know Col. Hunt will be looking for me back. I'll drive for him next year, and then I'm going to quit the Trail for good. I've had enough of it. Come, Cracklins, we must get back to our hole. That was a straight-out good dinner, Nasho. I believe you can lay over Cracklins on the bread question."

That night Capt. Dick and I slept under the wagon, and had the horses and mules tied to the wheels. As Capt. Dick says, I think red-skin, white man, Chinaman, or any other sort of thief, will have hard work to get them without our knowing it. I had rather watch every night for a month than to lose Comanche.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CAPT. DICK SPENDS SUNDAY IN DEADWOOD. WHAT
CAME OF IT.

SATURDAY night came almost before we knew it. Anxious as we were to get through with our work, none of us were sorry to see it. Sitting upon my favorite lookout rock that evening, I happened to think that Sunday would n't be any holiday for me. Indians did n't keep any, neither could the guard. I was a little disappointed at first, because I had counted on having a good time Sunday lying up and reading, but I had been too used to driving every Sunday on the Trail to mind it much. I knew Cracklins and Capt Dick needed rest, and was glad they would get it. Sunday morning, at breakfast, Capt. Dick broke out with, —

“Look here, Charley, this guard business will break into your Sunday. I did n't think of that when I put you on. Looks like putting you on roots.”

“Oh, no, Capt. Dick, somebody must stand guard; and, as I have had the easiest time all the week, it is only right I should stand to-day. I don't mind it.”

"Well, here 's hoping it won't last long. I reckon I need n't tell you, I 'd a sight rather be behind the bulls seven days in a week than shovelling dirt out of a hole six, if I do get to lie up on Sunday. By way of a change, I am going to town to-day. There will be a good deal of stirring, and some of the loafers may happen up this way. Keep a sharp look-out on the horses, you and Nasho. Cracklins will get dinner for you to-day, I reckon."

"Sartinly, Massa Dick; I'll be good rested by den, and I'll tend to the cookin'. What'll you hab for dinner?"

"I don't expect to be back to dinner; get anything you please; the best there is in camp. Do we want any groceries?"

"You mout git some Irish taters and some inguns, Mas Dick. I bleeve we dun got eberyting else, lessn it's sum fresh meat."

"All right; get me out a couple of sacks and I'll bring some out with me. What can I do for you in town, Charley?"

"Bring me some of the last newspapers, Capt. Dick. I reckon you will hardly find any Texas paper there. Get the 'Missouri Republican,' if you can find it, — it will have some Texas news, — and the 'New York Weekly Sun,' and two or three other good ones, and 'Harper's,' or 'Scribner's Monthly.'

"Had n't I better take in the wagon for a load?"

"Capt. Dick, it's lonesome up there on the hili with nothing to do but watching for Indians that

ain't ever going to come, and papers come in good play. I like to know what 's going on in the world, and reading don't keep me from watching."

"Bless your little soul, don't I know that! You can have all the papers you want, though it's dangerous business, Charley, reading on guard. There ain't many men I'd allow to take anything to read with them, if they were standing guard for me. I ain't afraid to trust you, though. What can I bring you, Nasho?"

"Nutn but some paper for cigarette and bacca. Me hardly smoke any yesterday."

"You don't deserve any, for not telling me you were out. Here's enough to last you until I come out, and I'll bring you some then. Anything you'll have, Cracklins?"

"Nutn but some bacca, an' two, tree clay pipes, Mas Dick. I dun broke my lass one yistiddy, genst dat pick. You kin jiss charge me wid it, an' tek it out at de end ob de munt."

"You just stand up to that pick and shovel like a good one, and I'll keep you in tobacco and pipes. Keep your eyes skinned, boys, while I am gone."

After breakfast Nasho took out the horses and laid down on a rock, where he could watch them. Cracklins went down to the branch to wash out some clothes. I went off to my guard, telling Cracklins before I left not to get out of sight of camp, and to call me if anybody came.

The day passed off as usual. Capt. Dick did not

come back until late in the evening, and then he did not seem to be in much of a humor for talking. He brought everything that was wanted, and a lot of papers for me. Camp was very quiet after supper. Capt. Dick lay before the fire, smoking. I sat on the robe beside him, reading. Nasho and Cracklins were smoking. Now and then a puff of air would blow ashes into Rover's nose and make him sneeze, or a horse would shift his feet or bite his leg, but these were the only noises. Before long, Nasho and Cracklins went off to bed. Capt. Dick lay still and smoked, and I read on in the silence of the night, so much interested that I did not know how fast time was passing. At last—it must have been nearly eleven o'clock—I threw aside my papers, and said jokingly to Capt. Dick,—

“What's the matter to-night, Capt. Dick? You seem very solemncholy.”

“I've good reason for it, Charley. I've seen enough to-day to make a man feel solemn, if he has any feeling in him.”

He put his arm around me, and drew me to him just as he did that night he found me out in the prairie in a norther,* and, lying with my head on his breast, I waited for him to go on.

“I was so completely disgusted with pitching dirt out of that hole out yonder, that I thought I'd go to town to-day for a spree. I did n't intend to get

* See Live Boys in Texas, Chapter XVIII. — A. M.

drunk ; I 've never had so much liquor in me that I did n't know what I was doing, but I wanted to drink enough to make me feel good ; and, when a man does that, he's almost sure to do something he'll be ashamed of afterwards. It's the strangest thing in the world to me, Charley, that a man of any sense will deliberately drink what he knows will make a fool of him, and when he knows how thoroughly disgusted he will be with himself afterwards. I thought you wanted to go, and I could have fixed a way for you to have gone, but I did n't want you ; did n't want you to see me doing what I would be ashamed of afterwards. You have never been in Deadwood in daylight ? Well, it's just two strings of houses on each side of a gulch for rather more than two miles, placed here and there just where it suited the fancy of the owners to put them. They are mostly of wood, put together in a hurry, though there are some of dobe, not a few of tent-cloth or zinc, and plenty of dug-outs. In some places you can walk along the street and look down a man's chimney, and in fifty yards you will be looking at some feller's yardway up above your head. There are some of the queerest holes for men to live in ever you saw, and some of the queerest men living in 'em, too. You'd think at first about every fifth house was a saloon, beside nearly every restaurant having a bar. There's the Rosebud and Big Horn, and Custer and Crook, and Capt. Jack and Lone Jack, and Miner's Delight and Bullwhacker's Joy, and Ace High. and nearly every-

thing in the way of names you could think of ; all places for making fools of men, getting their money, poisoning their stomachs, and burying up what little soul they have got left. Early as it was, the streets were full, and the motliest crowd that ever I saw. You could scarcely figure out to yourself any sort of rig that could n't be duplicated there. I saw one fellow with a broadcloth coat, satin vest, and buckskin breeches, and another with a suit of old rags that would n't have stood him in a dollar, and a watch worth three hundred in the dust. Three or four fellows had hired a glass-front carriage, and were rolling over the rough street, smoking, and trying to make themselves believe they were cutting a splurge, and there were lots of fellows dashing about on their cayuses yelling like Indians. Calamity Jane was on the street on horseback, riding straddle, drunk as a fool, and cutting up like a greaser on a spree. Most of the stores were open, and the saloons were in full blast. I went into one of the finest-looking ones, and called for a drink of their best. I don't wonder men go crazy over just such whiskey as that, and there's a deal that is even worse. It's rank poison. It set me on fire so that I went to another place and took another drink. It was n't so mean, but it was strong for keeps. By the time I had got another one in me I began to feel it, for they were all stiff horns. I was n't in the least drunk ; just in that fix when a man will do things that he would n't do otherwise, and that most likely he will be ashamed of afterwards.

I did n't want to be riding round all the time, and I did n't think it was safe to leave Beelzebub tied anywhere, so I started for a livery stable. Just as I got down at the door, an ugly, ragged, bull-headed fellow stepped up and claimed Beelzebub ; said he was stolen from him four months ago. I did n't like the fellow's looks, and did n't fell at all like taking any of his impudence, but I held myself in, and told him he was mistaken ; that I had owned the horse five years. He swore he was n't, and said he could bring a man to swear that he was his horse, and had been stolen from him, and at that another seedy-looking loafer stepped up, and swore that what the first one had said was all so. I saw it was a plan to bluff me out of my horse, and just remarked to them that he was my horse, and I was going to keep him. The stable-keeper asked me if I wanted to put up my horse. I told him I did, if he would guarantee to return him to me, as he had heard the other man claim him. He said he 'd be very certain to do that very thing, unless he was taken out of his hands by the law, which was n't very likely to happen. So I turned Beelzebub over to him, and started off. I had n't taken but three or four steps before the fellow that claimed him halloed to me to stop, and swore we had a little matter to settle. As I turned toward him I saw he was going for his pistol. Mine was under my coat, and did n't show, and I reckon the fool thought I did n't have any. I was ready as quick as he was, but I did n't much think he would shoot, and let him

take the drop. He blazed away, and the ball cut the edge of my ear just enough to sting sharply. I had n't been mad at the fellow in the least, and, if I had n't had that whiskey in me, I don't think I would have hurt him even then. You know I am pretty good with a pistol, and I could have stopped his shooting by breaking his arm, but the sting of the ball maddened me so that I threw up and pulled, and he fell, bleeding like a beef. The other one took to his heels, yelling murder like a scared calf. The stable-keeper came out, and we carried him in and laid him on his bed. He sent for a doctor, and I staid to hear what he had to say about it, and because I did n't want to seem to be getting out of the way. A little crowd soon gathered, and wanted to know what it was about. The stable-keeper told them how it happened. 'Served him right,' seemed to be the general opinion, and they scattered off again. The doctor came, examined him carefully, and shook his head; said it was a lung shot, and a bad one, and the chances were that he would n't come through. It sobered me mighty quick, Charley, the idea that I had killed him. I've done my share in the army, I reckon, but I never thought of it there, and I've stood by at the hanging of more than one, when there was n't any lawing going on, though I'm glad to say I never had any hand in the hanging, but I never before shot a man face to face. I don't doubt any court or jury in the country would clear me, because the fellow had shot at me without any provo-

cation, and came mighty near sending me to Kingdom Come, too; still, if I had n't had any whiskey in me, I don't believe I would have hurt him so badly. It was too late now, though, so I had him carried to a house where he would be taken care of, and told the doctor to do his best to pull him through, get more help if he needed it, and I would pay all expenses. I went up the street, and into a gambling-room, to get rid of my thoughts, and watched the betting. I need n't tell you I did n't get any satisfaction out of that.

"The table was never idle. Men were coming and going all the time, some merely looking on, and others stopping to risk their hard-earned savings. I noticed one man, a fine-looking, middle-aged man, who was watching the game with a great deal of eagerness. Two or three times he ran his hand in his pocket hurriedly, fumbled about a moment, and then withdrew it, but after a while he pulled out some money, called for some chips, paid for them, and began playing. He lost the first three bets, then won half a dozen, lost again, and won again. He won a dozen straight bets, and then the luck turned against him. I never saw a more intensely excited face as he kept piling down his money, and he seemed to have a good deal. It was as if there was a burning fire inside of him, that was eating him up. He kept on playing feverishly, increasing his bet every deal, until the last dollar was swept away, and feeling in his pocket-book for more, he found there was

none there. His face was a terrible picture of horror, remorse, and despair. Throwing up both hands, he cried out, —

“‘O my God! the last dollar gone, and my poor wife and babies almost starving. I had enough to have made us all so happy, and I was going home to-morrow, and now —’ He fell heavily to the floor in a faint. The cashier handed a man, who seemed to be a friend of the loser, twenty dollars for a grub-stake, and gruffly told him next time he had better keep his pard away from the table, and the game went on. It made me sick at heart, and I went out and walked up street again. Seeing a man speaking, and a little crowd gathered, I went there. Standing on a goods box, with a Bible in his hand, a tall, lank, roughly dressed man was preaching. His talk was n’t much smoother than his clothes, but anybody could see that it came from his heart, and that he was in earnest about it. He believed what he said so strongly himself, that he wanted other people to believe it too. Judging from the way he kept bringing it in, I reckon his text was, —

“‘What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’

“It’s been a long time since I was in a church, Charley, and a longer one since I have looked into the Bible mother gave me. No man ever had a better one. We lived out in the prairie too far from any church to get there often, and no school anywhere in reach; but she taught me how to read,

and ma. y and ma. ny a Sunday did I use to read to her out of the family Bible, and she would tell me about what I read, and try to teach me to be a better man than I've grown up to be. Nobody knows how much worse I might have been but for her. I hope she don't know what's been done to-day, — a good many other days, for that matter.

“I think there were a good many in that crowd that came as I did, just through curiosity, and because they did not know what else to do with themselves, and I don't believe I was the only one that staid in spite of himself because he was reminded of the time when he had been a better boy than he was a man, and was almost ready to promise that he would take a new start, and try to follow the other trail hereafter. It's been a long, long time since I've had such a queer feeling as I did when the preacher finished and kneeled down, and prayed that those who were travelling the broad road might be led to turn back and take the narrow, crooked, rocky path that would be hard to travel, and might not lead them to any rich diggin's here, but would be sure to make them everlastingly rich and happy hereafter. My heart was nearly in my throat as I put on my hat and walked away.

“I waited until late in the evening, to get the last news from the man who was shot. I need n't tell you I was glad to learn that he was doing as well as could be expected; better, indeed, than the doctor had feared. I begged him to do the best, and every-

thing for him that he could, and then started for home. Hearing two pistol-shots in quick succession, I galloped up to see what was the matter. In the middle of the crowd that had gathered, I saw a woman lying on the ground dead. Near her stood a strong, rather good-looking man, with a pistol in his hand. His coat was cut in the left side, and he was bleeding. He had a wild, dazed look about him as he turned first to the dead woman at his feet, and then to the crowd around him. That low muttering that nearly always begins in a crowd when there is trouble brewing, began. Directly, some one cried out, 'Hang him!' and a dozen voices repeated it. 'Hang him! hang him! hang him!' Half a dozen men sprang forward and seized him.

"'What are you about, men?' he asked, as if he still did n't know what had taken place.

"'Just a goin' to have a hangin', and you'll have to furnish the man.'

"'Why, men, you don't mean to say you are going to hang me for shootin' that hussy? She tried to kill me first. Look how I am bleeding! Why don't somebody go for a doctor?'

"'Don't trouble yourself about a doctor, unless you want one to cut you up after you have passed in your checks. As to that scratch in your side, we'll soon cure that. Come along, you —— scoundrel.'

"They dragged him to a tree by the side of a road, put a goods box under it, stood him up on it, fastened a rope to a limb of the tree and around his

neck, and told him if he had anything to say, to say it quick. He had waked up in earnest, and such mortal terror and agony I never saw on any face before, and hope I never may again. He begged and prayed to be released; pointed to the green hills lighted up by the last rays of the setting sun, and told them they did not know how beautiful these things were, how hard it was to leave them; then looking in the faces of the men about him, and seeing no pity there, called on God to help him in the most pitiful language, and then again, in his agony of terror, broke into the most horrible oaths. In mercy to him they swung him off, and I turned away and gave Beelzebub the reins. And this has been my Sunday, — a day mother always taught me was to be kept sacred and holy."

He paused a few moments, and seemed to be in a deep study. I felt sure he was thinking of his mother, and said nothing to break the silence. After a little he said quietly, —

"I have n't a great deal of faith in such promises, Charley, because I've known so many of them to be made when the feelings had been deeply and strongly stirred, and then in two or three days they faded out, and only left the parties feeling meanly, because of their own weakness; but I've promised mother and myself to-night that I will stop swearing and drinking. I expect there will be times when the blood will get hot, and an oath may break loose before I can stop it, but I am going to shut down on swearing

hard and fast, until it is broken up entirely. I don't say I will never take another drink of whiskey,—mother wouldn't ask that if she was here,—because if I am cold, and wet, and worn out, and need it, I don't think there is any more harm in it than in a drink of coffee; but I never intend to take another drink for the love of it, or unless I think I need it. And, Charley, if you hear me swear, just let me know it. I reckon it is getting late; let's go to bed, and be ready for to-morrow's work."

"Capt. Dick, I hope there won't ever anybody come to be a better friend; that is, that you won't ever like anybody else better than you do me."

"No fear of that, Charley. I haven't got any brother, and I don't make friends as easily as some folks; so, when I've found one like you, I can't help but freeze to him."

CHAPTER XXV.

STRIKING ROCK. BLASTING. THE ROCK-PUNCHER
QUITS WORK. FINDING GOLD-DUST THAT THEY
DID NOT COME TO LOOK FOR. WHOSE IS IT?

WEDNESDAY evening Cracklins struck rock solid rock, as it proved, when he tried to dig around it. Capt. Dick told me about it that evening at supper, and seemed a good deal discouraged. It would take so long to dig through it.

"Why not blast it, Capt. Dick?"

"Of course! just the thing! Why did n't I think of it before? I don't know how to blast, Charley, and I don't like fooling with powder."

"We'll have to get somebody that does understand it."

"I don't see any other way. I don't like to bring anybody else in, because I thought we would just keep our business to ourselves, but I reckon we can take care of ourselves and what belongs to us. I'll go in town in the morning, and see if I can pick up a man that understands that kind of work."

He went in early in the morning, and came back in the evening, bringing a man with him. He was n't the kind of man I ever would have picked

out to handle powder, or anything else that one ought to have their eyes open about. He had a good-natured, easy look about him, and his clothes were old and ragged, — just the man, to look at him, for a cook to a drover's outfit. He was afoot, and did not bring anything with him but his tools, not even any blankets. As soon as he got in he lit his pipe, sat down, and went to smoking, as much at home as if he belonged there.

"Don't look like he was much force, does he, Charley?" Capt. Dick said, as soon as we were together alone.

"No, he don't, Capt. Dick. Looks like he was lazy and careless enough to blow us all up, though."

"I reckon he belies his looks. He was recommended to me as the best man in the diggings for blasting. There's one good point about him; I don't think he will bother himself about what don't belong to him, nor go about town shooting his mouth off about what we are doing. We'll see to-morrow what he knows about his work."

I wanted very much to see how blasting was done, but I didn't want to leave my post, so I had to wait until after they had quit work in the evening, to learn what had been done.

"How did you get along to-day?" said I to Capt. Dick, as we were tying up and feeding the horses.

"Very well, I expect, though I don't know enough about this work to know whether he's making much headway for fast or not. That rock-puncher under-

stands his business, there's no two ways about that. As soon as he got to the hole, and took a look round, he said, —

“ ‘Curious place you fellows have picked for your claim. Don't reckon it makes any difference, though. There don't anybody know where gold is going to be struck. Fellows come out here fresh from college with a load of books and hammers, and go peckin' round, and prove by their books that there's bound to be gold here and bound to be gold there, and put thousands of dollars into the ground without ever raising color, and some fool nigger drops down on the most unlikely place could be found, and strikes it rich. But I don't remember ever seeing any diggin' done in a land-slide afore, and that's jess what you fellows are doin'. That ain't no bed rock you've hit down there. It's jess a big one that's been brought down with the slide. It could be dug round and hoisted out, ef you had any hoisting machinery, near about as cheap as it can be blasted; but, as you ain't got the derrick, there ain't no way but to put the powder in it. That'll fetch it in splinters.’

“He got down and began with his crow-bar punching a hole about an inch in diameter, turning the bar a little every time he brought it down. He showed Cracklins how to take out the rock dust with his spoon, — that long, slender iron rod with the spoon at the end. When he had got down about three feet he took the spoon himself, and cleared out the

hole very carefully. Then he put in the charge with a slender funnel, fourteen and a half ounces of blasting powder, pressing it down very carefully with a wooden rod, just the diameter of the hole. He's one of the most careful workmen I ever saw. No danger of his blowing us up. Then he put down the needle, a slender rod of copper about as big as a straw, with a slightly curved point, and wrapped with paper. This was put down at one side of the hole, and held in place by me, while he tamped the hole. On top of the powder he put a wad of dry straw, about two inches thick, which he pressed down carefully, but not tightly, with his tamping bar, a kind of light crow-bar with a smooth flat end, instead of a point. On top of that he put two inches of stone rubbish, then more straw and more rubbish, punching it down as tight as he could get it, and so on until he was within three or four inches of the top. That he filled up with moist clay, and rammed it down as tight as he could get it. Then he put an iron bar through the ring at the end of the needle, and, by striking it upward with his hammer, he lifted the needle out, leaving a hole just its size running clear down to and connecting with the charge at the bottom. This little hole he filled up with fine powder, put to it a fuse made of coarse brown paper soaked in saltpetre, set fire to the end farthest from the powder, and then told us to leave. We got out of the hole and went off far enough to be out of danger from any flying pieces of rock, and waited for the

explosion. It was n't long in coming, and did n't make a great deal of noise when it did come, but when we got there we found it had done its work, and blown off the whole top of the rock. He has nearly finished another hole, and will put in another blast to-morrow morning, which he thinks will clear up the rest of the rock. This hole is n't to be more than two feet deep. He don't think there will be any more blasting to do after we get through this rock ; says there may be loose rock, but none that will need blasting. Getting the rock out after it was broken up is what has made work so slow to-day. I expect we will have to rig up a pulley to-morrow, and hoist the rock and dirt out with a mule. We are getting along faster than I feared we would when we struck that rock."

After supper that evening I lit the lantern, and got out the papers and magazines Capt. Dick had brought me, for a read. Our lantern is not like the ordinary little ones. It's a regular lamp cased in heavy glass, with a wire frame around it, and gives a strong, clear light.

"Hello, young one!" our rock-puncher, as Capt. Dick calls him, sang out, "what a lot of reading truck you've got. Can't you pass a fellow over a paper? I've been out of work lately, —dull times at the diggings, and my pockets have been too empty to get my usual reading grub. Most any of the boys will give me a place by the skillet and fry-pan, and a blanket at night, but there's a heap of 'em don't

care much about reading. They 're tired, too, with handlin' the pick and shovel all day, and had rather handle cards than books at night. I ain't had hardly anything to read for most two weeks, and I'm plum starved out."

"Help yourself," said I, handing him the pile. When we went to bed at ten o'clock, he was too deeply engaged in one of the magazines to pay any attention to what was going on around him. I showed him the oil-can, so he could fill up again, if he wanted to, for the oil was getting low, and in two minutes was sound asleep. Living out of doors in this clear, pure air, and taking so much exercise, give one a good appetite for eating and sleeping. I am afraid we will get to sleeping so soundly, that if the Indians come neither the horses nor Rover will wake us up.

Next day at noon I found our rock-puncher at camp, reading. Capt. Dick said that evening that after the second blast he said there was n't any more blasting to do, and there was n't any use in paying him five dollars a day when there was n't anything for him to do; but that, if we were willing, he would like to board with us a few days, and if there should be any more work for him, he would be on hand. Capt. Dick told him he was welcome to the run of the camp, if he wanted to stay.

"He's the hungriest fellow for reading ever I saw, Charley, and the hardest one to fill up. I thought you were pretty keen set, but he can give you two

days in the week, and then beat you. It's a deal better than drinking and gambling, or loafing, and the fellow is willing enough.

"While I went after the axe, he gave Cracklins a few wrinkles about breaking up the rock, so it would n't be so heavy to haul out, and putting up the windlass, and then took himself off to camp, and sat down to reading, and he's been at it ever since. I reckon he'll quit us when he has read us out."

The next morning Capt. Dick and Cracklins put in a windlass to draw out the rock with, as it was too heavy to throw up by hand. They cut two stout trees, about eight inches in diameter, with forks at one end, and sunk one on each side of the pit opposite each other, about two feet in the ground. Then they cut another one long enough to reach across, made axles at the ends, so it would work smoothly in the forks, put on a handle at one end, greased the axles, and their windlass was finished and ready for work. Hearing Capt. Dick call me about three o'clock that evening, I went down to see what he wanted. I found him sitting by an old iron pot, rusty, and with a piece broken out of it.

"Well, Charley, here it is. Let's see if it is all right. I waited to open it until you came."

He took the lid off, — it had rusted in so tightly that he could scarcely tear it loose, — and found two buckskin bags, about half as large as shot bags, tied up very carefully. Untying them, we found them to be full of gold-dust.

"Go to camp, Charley, and bring the steel-yard and we'll see what they weigh."

I brought them, and we weighed the bags, — thirty-eight pounds and a half each.

"Let's see what they are worth. From what I've seen down in Deadwood, I should say this was very fine gold; it is redder than what they get there mostly, though I've seen some from French Creek as red as this. If it is very fine it is worth twenty-two dollars to the ounce. There are twelve ounces to the pound, troy weight, — and that's what they use in weighing gold and silver, — that is twelve times twenty-two equals two hundred and sixty-four dollars to the pound. I reckon those bags will weigh about a half-pound each; that leaves thirty-eight pounds of dust in each; and thirty-eight times two hundred and sixty-four is ten thousand and thirty-two dollars, and twice that is twenty thousand and sixty-four dollars, if my figuring is right, and I think it is. I thought you said there were thirty thousand dollars, Charley?"

"That is what Mr. Lenton told me."

"Are you certain?"

"Yes, Capt. Dick, I am certain."

"Then where is the other ten thousand? If anybody had found it, and taken part, they would have taken all; and beside, this ground has n't been disturbed. It would show if it had."

"This is n't Mr. Lenton's money."

"Wha-at!" And he looked up at me with a very curious, inquiring expression.

"Don't you see, Capt. Dick, this can't be his. Look at the height of that bluff up there made by the land-slide."

"Well!"

"Now look at the height of this platform we are standing on above the ravine where it comes out from under the land-slide. You see the land-slide must have covered up the *coulé* at least thirteen feet, and more likely fifteen or sixteen. Then his dust was buried in a pot-hole in the rock, three feet below the surface, and a mountain ash growing over it. Now you haven't got down deeper than ten feet. I don't see any pot-hole in rock, where this came from, and there isn't any tree or bush of any kind there."

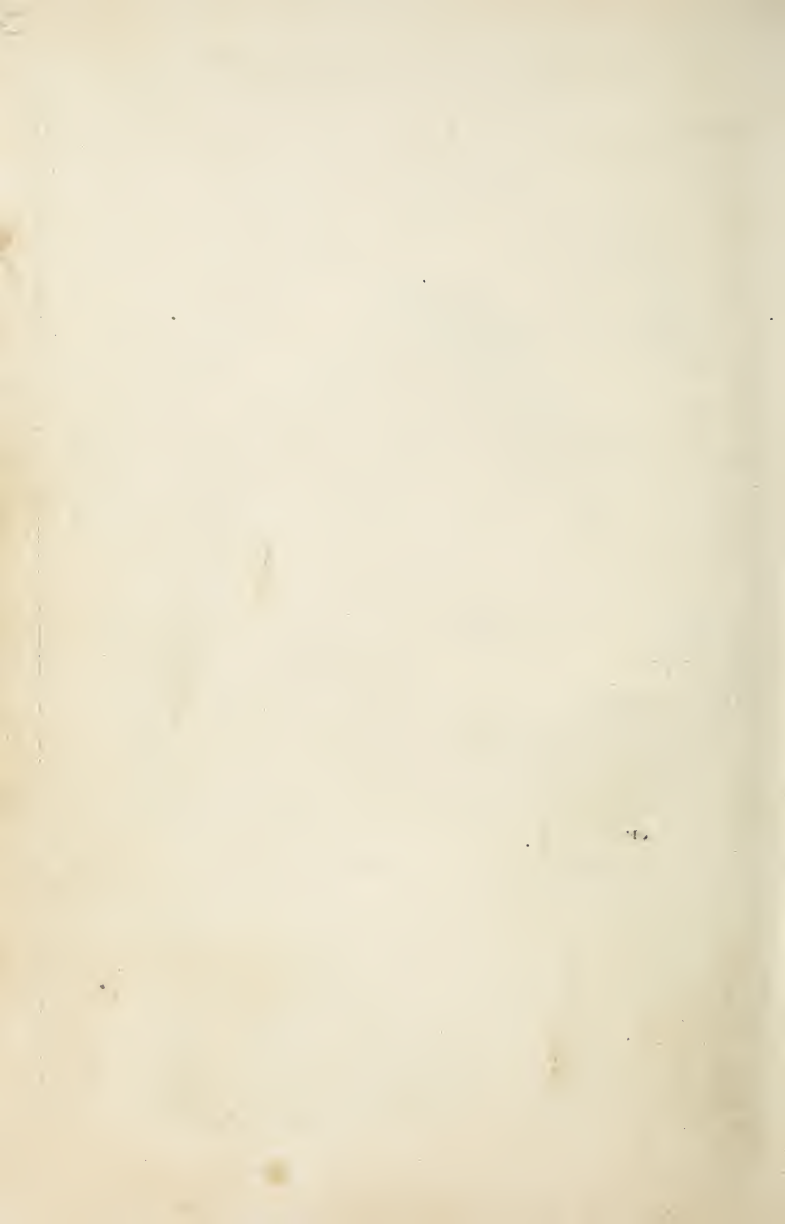
"That's all so, Charley, but it ain't likely that two men would have buried money in the same place."

"They did n't. This pot that we have found was buried up there on the hillside under that bluff. I have no doubt it was under that big rock you had so much trouble in blasting. When the land-slide came it moved rock, money, and all, just as it was, and left it right here in our way."

"Then there ought to be something to show who buried it."

"There ought to be, Capt. Dick, but there most likely is not. From it's being buried in an exposed





place like that up there, it is very likely that whoever did it did it in the night and in a hurry. He may have been expecting to be attacked by Indians, and thought there was a good chance of getting captured by them, and did n't want his money with him."

"But what good would it do to bury it without anything to show who it belonged to if it should be found?"

"He evidently expected to have a chance to come back after it some time, or he would n't have buried it at all. Most likely he has been killed, or he may have wandered off somewhere like Mr. Lenton, and never been back this way since."

"I reckon he's dead, laid out most likely by the Indians somewhere in these mountains, where he has never been found, and nothing left of him but a skeleton now."

"Did you look closely, Capt. Dick, to see if there was any paper about the pot anywhere?"

"I thought of that, Charley; there was n't a scrap of any kind."

"Then there's nothing to tell to whom it belongs."

"What shall we do about it, Charley?"

"My idea is that we ought to take it and put it in some bank on special deposit, and let it stay there at least five years. If the bank breaks it won't be lost. Then we had better put an advertisement in the New York 'Herald' and 'Sun,' and a St. Louis paper, once a week for a year. Of course we won't

tell how it was found, or how much there is, and anybody applying for it will have to describe it so exactly that there can be no doubt about his being the man who buried it, or having been told of it by the man who buried it. If in that time we don't find the owner, I think we will be right in taking it for ourselves. If the owner is n't dead then, there will not be any probability of our ever finding him, and of course we will have the best right to it. If we knew to whom it belonged, and he was dead, we could turn it over to his heirs; but as it is there ain't any way of finding out whose it is, as I can see."

"That's about the right way, Charley, I reckon. Whoever this belongs to most likely worked hard for it, and I'd a great deal rather help him to get his own than do anything to keep him from it. It would be a pretty little pile for us to make, Charley, but I don't want a cent of it unless we come by it perfectly squarely. What to do with it is the next thing. I've no doubt that rock-puncher in camp is honest, but I'd rather that nobody but ourselves knew of our having this dust. I'll go to camp after a little, and ask him to go to town to get us some groceries and tobacco, as we are so busy, and while he's gone we'll dig a hole and *cache* these things under the wagon. With Nasho watching them in the daytime, and us sleeping on them at night, I think they'll be pretty safe. How will that do, Charley?"

"I don't see how we could do any better. Our

rock-puncher seems to be a clever sort of a fellow, Capt. Dick, and I reckon he has n't got much money just now. Suppose you ask him to get three or four good 'Lakesides' for me, and give him the money, and then he can read them, too."

"I'll do it, Charley, and some newspapers, too. I won't send him until late, so that we can do our *caching* in the dusk, if anybody should happen to be watching us, which ain't in the least likely. — Well, Cracklins, we had as well get to work again. I thought we were done when I caught a glint of that old black pot. — I declare, Charley, it seems like this must be Mr. Lenton's money. It hardly seems possible that two piles of money would be found, one right over the other."

"You may not find any more, Capt. Dick, but I am very certain that is not Mr. Lenton's money that we came here to find. I believe, too, you will find that when you get to the right place."

"Massa Dick, does you and Mas Charley blebe you is gwine ter fine more ob dem leetle bags ob goldust by diggin' dis hole deeper?"

"That's what we came here from Texas for, Cracklins."

"Den you is heap eezier to blebe what ain't eber gwine fur ter be dan dis nigger. I don't mean no disrespec', Mas Dick an' you Mas Charley, but who eber heern ob de littenin' strikin' twice in de same place. 'Tain't nufin ter me. I'se reddy fur ter wuk whareber you says, but I ain't cal'latin' on raisin'

nary nuther crap offen dis field. I knows dis nigger nebber cud, shuah, but mebbe you an' Mas Charley kin. Anybody what kin make money offen a wagin load ob cats ought to make money offen anyting they tries, 'pears ter me like."

CHAPTER XXVI.

CAPT. DICK AGREES TO GO INDIAN RANGING. HE
FINDS THE BURIED GOLD-DUST. CACHING IT.
FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS, AND NO RICHER.

SATURDAY evening, as we were getting ready for the night, we saw some one coming directly to our camp with something on his back. As he came closer, Capt. Dick said to me, —

“Hello, Charley, that’s the man I sold the cat to on time. I’ll bet he’s coming to pay for it.”

“Good evening,” said the stranger, as he reached camp.

“Good evening. Drop your load and take a seat,” replied Capt. Dick, handing him one of our camp-stools.

“It has been so long, Cap’n, since I’ve sat in a chair, I expect I will fall off of this one. I came over to settle for that cat. You haven’t any idea how much company she has been to me. It’s a lonely place where I am working, and I used to get terribly lonesome out there by myself. But now, when I come in at night, it is almost like I had company. She always comes out to meet me, and hangs

about me while I am getting supper, and when she lies down on my pallet, and goes to purring, it reminds me so much of home."

"Oh, well, never mind about any settlement. If she has been any company to you, I am glad of it, and perfectly satisfied."

"I had rather carry out our bargain, Cap'n."

"Ain't you willing for me to do as little a thing as that toward making your camp home-like? I'm a stranger here, and may need help of some kind myself. As to company, why I'm well off. These youngsters and I have laid around the same fire often enough to know each other pretty well by this time, but this is a new business to us. Put us behind the bulls and I reckon we would know as well what to do and how to do it as the next one, no matter where he came from, but when it comes to handling pick and shovel, I don't believe we are much force. As to telling where the gold is, a blind man could do that on a dark night as well as any of us."

"I guess that's more than any of us can do. I've seen some of the oldest miners dig for months without finding a pay streak, and I've seen a greenhorn hit it the first day. Looks like there had been such a tumbling about up in these mountains that everything was upside down, and the rocks don't lay as they ought to, according to the books."

"I reckon locating gold by the books is a good deal like raising cattle on paper. It's the prettiest

business ever you saw, according to the greenies. There's all the figures, so much for land, so much for seed stock, so much for expenses, and here's your increase worth so much. Subtract one from the other, and there's your profit, and figures can't lie. But when they come to try it on in the range, the profits have all gone into dead and missing cattle, and many a time a good part of the principal besides. Some fellow that don't know anything about figures, comes out and goes to work on the shares, and whenever he can get a few spare dollars puts them into stock, and lives with the cattle day and night, turns up in a few years with a pretty stock of his own, and then goes on making money straight along."

"That's about the way of it, Cap'n. I brought you over a piece of bear-meat. Guess you don't get much this near town. One came by my way the other day, and, happening to run across his track, I struck work, followed him up and killed him, and, as he was unusually fat for this time of the year, I thought I'd bring you over a bit."

"Much obliged. Bear meat *is* a treat to us, to me particularly. These youngsters live up in the mountains, where it's not an uncommon dish, but it's mighty seldom I set eyes on any. Cracklins, clean out this gentleman's sack, and give us some of that bear-meat for supper; plenty of it, too."

"Dat means I'se to cook it all, don't it, Mas Dick?"

"Do you think we're a pack of starving wolves, you greedy old sinner?"

"Well you knows, Mas Dick, you ain't bin had no bar-meat in de longest, and you has powerful good appetite up in dese mount'ns, and what's de use ob making two bites at one simmun and hit a Mexikin simmun at dat; none ob yer big punkin, yaller simmunds."

"Any way to suit you, you greasy old rascal, and —"

"Dere won't be none wasted while you'se 'bout, Mas Dick."

"Hurry up your supper, and give us some flapjacks."

"Lor, Mas Dick, dere ain't no doctors 'bout here."

"What's that to do with your getting supper?"

"Kase ef you eats b'ar meat and flapjacks, and 'lasses fur supper, you'll be dat sick dat it'll tek' a rigimint ob doctors, an' a wagin' load ob fizzic ter clean you out so you kin sot up ag'in. You'll t'ink you' time hab come fur true."

The sober, serious way in which he spoke made all hands break into a hearty laugh. I heard him mutter to himself, as if he believed every word of it, —

"Me and Mas Charley won't git ter sleep none fur a week, fur sittin' up wid you. Flapjacks and 'lasses and b'ar meat wa'n't made fur white folks' stumiks at night, nohow. Dey jess fits a nigger's do."

"That's a queer old cook you've got there, Cap'n. But I must be going. It's a good ways over to my claim."

"Not to-night. That ain't our way of doing things. We ain't crowded for room, and can give you a good shake-down, and you are just as welcome as a pay-streak. Better stay over Sunday with us. You won't have any work to do to-morrow, I reckon."

"Much obliged to you Cap'n. I don't see much company, and I'll be glad to stay with you to-night; but I must get back to camp in the morning. You see I have n't got any partner or camp-keeper but little pussy, and I don't want to leave her by herself long, for fear something might happen to her."

"Trust a cat to take care of herself."

"Besides that, when a man has good claim he likes to be around and know what's going on."

"I haven't anything to say against that. We'd be glad to have you stay, though; I'm glad to learn you've struck it at last."

"I need n't tell you I am. It looked like everything was against me for a good while, but I've no reason to complain now, and if it holds out a month I'll spend this winter at home."

"Won't you wash that down with some good whiskey?"

"No, thank you, I don't drink."

"De flapjacks and de b'ar meat am ready, Mas Dick, an' de Lord hab mussy on you, an' not let 'em kill you."

The next Wednesday, while we were at dinner, a man rode up and told us the Indians had broken out again, and driven a good many miners in. They had killed one whole family, — the man, his wife and child, — and the miners were making up a company to follow them, and give them such a whipping as would make them more careful about coming into the mines. He wanted to know if our camp could send a man.

"We are rather weak when it comes to soldiering. You see I am the only one in camp that could go, and I'm needed here badly."

"You see, Cap'n, there's powerful few men that have got critters to ride, and it ain't no use to start afoot. We know'd you had two of the best critters in the diggin's, and we'd like mighty well to have you go; but if you kaint, why you kaint. Reckon you kin send one of your critters."

"Not much. No man rides my horse while I am able to cross him, and this youngster's about of the same way of thinking. You may count us in for a man. When do you start?"

"Kaint git off 'fore mornin', Cap'n, but we 'lows to be on the road and travellin' 'fore the sun shows hisself."

"Where do you start from?"

"The Rosebud Saloon."

"All right, we'll have a man there. How long do you expect to be out."

"Reckon a man kaint tell much 'bout that when he starts out on a Injin trail. Better carry grub fur

four days, eenyhow. Ther' won't be none wasted. Evening to you."

"Well, Cracklins, I reckon we had as well put in the evening at our hole. Nasho, bake me bread enough for four or five days, and parch and grind coffee enough for a week."

Just a little while before sundown, I heard Capt. Dick call me, and went down to the hole.

"Here it is, Charley. I reckon there ain't any doubt about it this time."

Sure enough there was the pot-hole in the rock, and in it were three buckskin bags, which I had no doubt were full of gold-dust. Capt. Dick said they had been covered over carefully with dry bark and grass, and rocks laid over them, to keep the dampness out, he supposed. By the side of the hole was the mountain ash, mashed flat to the ground by the dirt and stones that had moved down on it.

"We'll leave it here for the present, Charley, and go to camp."

When we got there Capt. Dick asked our rock-puncher to go to town and get some things for us, and, when he had gone, sent Cracklins out to bring in the horses and mules.

"I wish that lantern-jawed mulewhacker that came here at dinner-time had stayed away. We're done here now, and I don't feel that it is any of my business to go Injin-hunting for these other fellows. I want to pull up stakes and leave here. We've been in luck, certain, and I'd like to quit before it

changes. But my word is out, and I'll have to go. We'll *caché* this find under that bush there, Charley, while camp is empty. It won't do to have it all together. If anything should happen that anybody should find one while we are away, he'll hardly think to look for another."

There was a good big rock under the bush, that it was as much as we could do to pull away. We dug a hole where it had lain, taking the dirt out carefully, putting it in a sack to be carried to the hole that evening, so that it would not attract attention. We worked as fast as we could, and talked while we worked.

"Capt. Dick, why not get somebody to go on the scout in your place?"

"I don't like that, Charley, this thing of hiring somebody to do your fighting. And, as that fellow said, they want men with good horses, and I ain't going to let anybody else ride Beelzebub."

"I'd rather let somebody take Comanche than for you to go now. It don't seem to me I would care half as much, if you had n't found the money. We ain't going to stay here any longer, and there is no use of your going now. We won't want any protection from the Indians."

"That's all so, Charley, but we might if we were going to stay here. We've been fortunate, and are ready to go, but there are plenty here who have to stay, and who must do something to keep the Injins off of them. When men go together in any

business like this, they must pull together and help each other."

"I wish I could go in your place."

"That would be nice, would n't it? I went off, and left you to nurse that Injin, but you don't catch me letting you run any more such risks, if I can help it. You can't serve us both any better than by staying here, and taking care of our find and camp."

"Would n't it be safer to put the money with the express company?"

"You'll do me for an express company. Nobody knows that we have this dust, and I ain't afraid to risk either Cracklins or Nasho about telling it. You'll have to stick to camp pretty close, until I get back. I have no idea we will overtake the Injins, and most likely we will be back in about three days. There is no telling, though, and you must not be uneasy about me if I don't get back for a week. You know Texans have the reputation of being good rangers, and I won't be the one to propose to take the back track."

We took the earth dug out to the hole, emptied it out, brought the bags of dust to camp, and weighed them. One hundred and twenty pounds. That would make about thirty thousand dollars, which was the sum Mr. Lenton said he had. We buried them in the hole under the bush, wrapping them up in a piece of hide, filled the hole up with dirt, and then pushed the rock back into its old place, so no one would suspect it had ever been disturbed.

"Now, Charley," said Capt. Dick, when we were through, "there will be nothing for any of you to do until I get back. You might put in one day hunting, but I would come back at night. Now that we have been successful in our trip, I feel like we ought to be more particular than ever. As soon as I get back we'll pull up stakes, and roll for Texas."

"I'll have to go to Minnesota before I go home."

"What for?"

"To take Miss Lenton her money."

"You can send that by draft."

"Yes, but I would rather hand it to her personally, and show her and her mother the will, else they won't know that I have any right to keep any of it."

"As to that, she will be just fifteen thousand dollars better off than she knows anything about. But I don't blame you for wanting to go yourself. You can leave us at Cheyenne, and overtake us at Ellis, and if you don't, we'll wait for you. And you can take that twenty thousand at the same time, and put it in a St. Louis bank."

"Capt. Dick, I am going to turn my share of the half over to Miss Lenton, too. Her mother has n't any one to help her, and I am a boy, and can take care of myself. I am satisfied with my share of the cat profits for this trip. I never intended to keep any of that money."

"Well, you can take her my share, too. I never intended to take it at first."

"Capt. Dick, I think you ought to keep your share. Your time is worth money, and there is n't any reason why you should work for some one that you don't know, and have no interest in."

"I did n't come for that. I came to help you. I am not losing anything by giving up what I never intended to keep. But if you are not going to keep your share, I am not going to give you mine. I intend to have an interest in Miss Lenton myself, and I am a good notion to go on with you, and get acquainted with her myself, and maybe I could cut you out, you young rogue."

"I wish you would come, Capt. Dick. I don't like to travel by myself, with that much money that don't belong to me, and I don't doubt Miss Marion and her mother would both be glad to see you."

"You are too willing by half, you young rascal. You will have to make that trip by yourself. But mind you, don't keep us waiting a month at Ellis. I'll give you a week to stay with her. That ought to be long enough to do a good deal of talking, and come, Charley, honest Injun, put in a word for me now and then."

We sat still a few minutes, each one busy thinking, I reckon, but directly Capt. Dick broke out into a low, amused laugh.

"Well, what is it?" I asked.

"I was just thinking what a curious fix we are in here. We have come all the way from Texas to look for money that had been buried, we have found fifty

thousand dollars, and we ain't a cent richer than we were at starting. Curious, ain't it?"

"Why not keep your share of the fifteen thousand?"

"Because I did n't come for that, and don't want it. I was n't thinking of that at all. I reckon it ain't often that anybody finds fifty thousand dollars for other people."

"You forget about the cat-money."

"No, I don't. That's as curious as the other. Here comes our rock-puncher. I reckon when I get back we'll pull off, and leave him in charge of camp. He seems like a clever fellow, but not much force. I never saw a hog fonder of buttermilk than he is of reading. Why could n't that man-hunter have staid at home, or gone somewhere else. I have n't lost any Injins, and I don't want to go hunting for any now. I would n't have cared last week."

Next morning by daylight he was off. "Keep your eye skinned, Charley," said he, as I shook hands with him in the saddle, "and take care of camp while I am gone."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CRACKLINS STRIKES AN OLD TUNNEL. OLD RELICS.
A RICH MINE. THE ORIGINAL BLACK HILLS
MINERS. AN ATTEMPT TO STEAL THEIR TUN-
NEL. HOW TO GET IT BACK.

NEXT morning after breakfast Cracklins said, "Mas Charley, I'se gwine ter dig in dat hole sum more. I tout it wuz all foolishness when we cummenced; did n't b'leebe we wuz eber gwine ter git nary grain ob gole-dus' outn dere, but dat war n't none of my bizness, but we dun dug so much outn dere, I bleebe dere must be more. T'other Sunday I wuz knockin' round 'mongst holes wha' had bin dug by dese gole-hunters, an' I seed most of 'em dug down straight fust, and den struck off straight sidewise, an' I'm gwine ter try dat plan too."

"All right, Cracklins; if you want to dig, we'll pay you just as we have been doing. We have got what we came here for, and did n't expect to dig any more."

"I'd jess ez well be doin' dat ez nuffin' while Mas' Dick's gone."

He went off to his work. Not liking to leave camp, I busied myself with some little chores, so that when Capt. Dick came back everything would be ready to leave. About eleven o'clock I heard Cracklins calling me, and went down to the hole.

"Well, Cracklins, have you found a gold mine?"

"I haint foun' nary gole mine, Mas Charley, but I wants ter know how cum dis house down here under groun'."

Sure enough, it did look as if he had found a house. There were heavy timbers running back into the ground, though so covered with earth that I could not tell what they had been for. Showing Cracklins how to dig, he soon uncovered the whole front. It was plain that at some time parties had run a tunnel into the hillside, roofing it overhead with rough logs, and protecting the sides also with logs. Two or three tin cans, a very rusty knife, an old frying-pan, and an old shoe were lying on the floor. I noticed a scar on one of the timbers that looked like a bullet-mark. I took out my knife and stuck the blade in the hole. It found the lead. Looking carefully around, I noticed many places where bullets had struck the timbers, sometimes sinking in, and again glancing off of the hard wood. Going in a little farther, I found an old stone tomahawk, the handle broken, and a great gap out of the stone edge. Farther in were bones lying scattered about as if they had been dragged about by animals, and an old rifle with the stock broken in two and the

hammer gone. I looked about carefully, but could find nothing else. I had no doubt but that some party had been mining there, and had been attacked by the Indians, and some, if not all, had been killed. The tunnel ran twenty feet into the hillside, roofed overhead and protected at the sides all the way. At the farther end I picked up several lumps from the floor, and took them to the light, but I did not know enough about ore to be able to tell whether they were rich or not. I thought there must be some gold in them. I took them to camp, and showed them to the rock-puncher.

"Hello!" said he, throwing down his Lakeside and jumping up excitedly. "Where did you get these?"

"Out of the hole."

"Ham boiled in champagne, that is, my lad. That is the richest ore I've seen in the Hills. Let's go and take a look where it came from."

I got a lantern, and we went to the hole, and to the end of the tunnel. He examined the sides and end carefully, breaking out pieces of the ore here and there, looking at them closely, and putting them in his pocket.

"Well, Charley, just how much of a fortune you've got depends on how this dirt holds out. The vein is a strong one, and as rich as oil. I reckon you are good for fifty thousand, anyhow, and if it holds out that vein will pan out millions, but I would n't bank on that. These Hills diggings haven't turned out any very big things so far."

"Who do you suppose dug this tunnel?"

"Why, you see, way back in '52 or '53, there was a party of three hundred started for the California diggings. I think their captain was named Bentley, or Benedick, or some such name. There was a strong crowd of 'em. When they got to Fort Laramie thirty of 'em struck off to have a prospect through the Hills. They thought they were strong enough to take care of themselves, and 'lowed, after having their hunt, to join the main crowd at the Humboldt. Only eight of them came back to the crowd, and they reported that they had found a rich gold mine in the Hills, and the rest concluded it was n't any use to go to California for what they had already found, and stayed there to work it. That was the last was ever heard of 'em, and I reckon this is their mine, and these bones is all that is left of 'em. From the looks of the sign I should say that the Indians penned 'em up in here, and fought 'em for several days. Their provisions give out, and I reckon they were scarce of water, too, and most likely some night they made a break to git away, but the Indians must have gobbled 'em all, or we would have heard from them that had got away. These bones belonged to men that were killed in here, or so badly hurt that they could n't get away."

"It is strange, though, that no one of the eight ever came back to look up the mine again."

"Most likely some of 'em were killed, or died on the road, and the rest settled down there, or made

enough to live on, and never bothered their heads again about it. There are mines all through the mountains from here to Oregon, that have been discovered by little parties — sometimes only one man — and their finders have been driven off by the Indians or cold weather, and never gone back again, and nobody else knows where they are. Miners is great hands for travelling. There is always a richer country ahead somewhere, and they are always ready to pull up stakes and strike out for it, when some fool starts a cock-and-bull story of rich diggings having been found. I'm going to town and have this stuff assayed, and see what it pans out. I don't need anybody to tell me that it is rich, but I don't know just how rich."

"Don't say anything about our find."

"You need n't think you can keep such a find as this to yourselves. The devil himself could n't tell how such things get out, but they do get out every time. You'll have fifty men here before night to look at this tunnel. That won't do any hurt. They won't carry any off, and it is your claim. I ain't going to spread the thing, but it'll get out in spite of fate, and no use trying to hide it."

He certainly must have told it as soon as he got to town, because he had n't been gone more than an hour before a crowd came up to look at the tunnel. I told Nasho to bring in the horses and tie them up, and stay closely in camp, and keep up a good watch, and I went down to the tunnel. From that until

night somebody was there all the time, and a good many in camp. They were rough, but civil enough. Many of them congratulated me heartily on our find, and seemed glad that we had had such good luck, as they called it. One jolly-looking fellow wanted to know if we was n't going to treat on that find. I told him that we did n't keep any liquor in camp, and did n't believe in drinking it, either, and that I could n't leave camp; but if he would act in my place, I would be glad to have him treat all that came to as much beer and cake as they wanted.

"Bully for you, little one! We'd rather have the whiskey, of course, but every man has a right to his own way, and if you are against drinking, not a drop shall be drunk on your treat."

I handed him fifty dollars, and asked him to explain to the rest that our boss was away after the Indians, and I could n't leave camp, and had asked him to treat for me.

"All right, young one, I'll set 'em up for you. Come on, boys!"

With three cheers for the "Texicans," as he called us, he led the crowd off.

Next morning, after breakfast, on going to the tunnel I was very much surprised to be halted by two men who pointed their guns at me, and ordered me to keep off. I asked them what they meant. They said that they did n't 'low to have anybody foolin' 'round their mine. I told them it was ours; that we had dug the hole and found the tunnel.

"Maybe you did, but I hain't seen no stakes here, and I did n't find no claim on the books at the office, and me and my pards here hev staked out this here claim, and I reckon we ar' gwine to hold it, onless you ar' better men than we ar', which ain't likely."

"Do you mean to say that you intend to steal this mine?"

"No stealing about it. The law says any man who takes up a claim must stake it out clear and fair, so it will show for itself, and give notice that he has tuk up the claim, and enter it on the register with such a description that there ain't no mistakin' of it, and then have it surveyed and work it, and I reckon you hain't done none of these things, leastwise we could n't find no stakes, and nothing on the register, and we've tuk up this claim, and ar' gwine ter hold it, and that's all thar is about it."

"We did not know that was necessary. It shows for itself that we have been working it."

"'Tain't our fault, what you did n't know, and 'tain't no use talking no more 'bout it. We mout git up bad blood ef we did, and somebody git hurt. We've come to stay, lessn you thinks you can run us off, and then I reckon the law would give us our rights."

I felt like running to camp, getting my gun, telling Nasho to come with me, and going back and fighting it out then and there, but I knew that was n't the way to get at it. The rock-puncher had not come back, and I believed he had something to do

with the plot to steal our mine. The shock-headed rascal who had talked to me had spoken of his pards, but I had not seen but one. Most likely the rock-puncher was the third.

I gave Nasho a note telling what I wanted, and sent him to town for a copy of the mining laws of the Territory. We ought to have had them when we began and followed them, but we did not intend to mine, and never took up a claim. When he had gone I walked up and down in camp, studying out what to do. I knew when Capt. Dick came back he would put on his six-shooter, go to the tunnel, and drive those fellows out, but he might get shot in doing so. And besides, if we had lost our claim by not following the law in taking it up properly, and they had gained a good title by following the law, driving them away by force would n't give us a title. I intended, by some means or other, to get the tunnel back into our hands before Capt. Dick came back. I thought and thought, but could n't see how it was to be done without an open row. All of a sudden, I happened to think of the time Black Jack and High-over tried to steal the herd of cattle, and how we got them back again, and I was certain I had it.*

When Nasho came back I read over the mining laws carefully. I found that to hold the tunnel we ought to have at once put up a board or post at its face, that is where it began in the hillside, and put on it a notice giving our names as owners claiming

* See Live Boys in Texas, Chapter XXIV, A. M.

it, showing the direction we expected it to run, the height and width, and the course and distance from its face to some well-marked landmark in the neighborhood, so that they could be known, and to have marked out, as nearly as we could, the lines within which we expected the tunnel to run. We would have been entitled to three thousand feet from the beginning of our tunnel. Then we ought to have filed a statement of our claim, with the fact that we intended to keep on working at the tunnel, in the office of the recorder. If I had known of all these things there would hardly have been time to have done them, because the tunnel was only found one morning, and that evening there was a crowd there all the time. The scoundrels that were trying to steal it must have filed their claim, if they had one at all, that evening, and put up their notice at the mouth of the tunnel in the night. It was no use for me to go and file a claim now, because I had not put up any notice, and I could n't get to the mouth of the tunnel now to put one up, because they had possession of it, and would n't let me. I felt like I had my hands full; fifty thousand dollars in gold-dust, buried in camp to watch, and a stolen mine to get back from the thieves, and nobody to talk with about it. It was lucky that rascally rock-puncher did n't know where the gold-dust was. I knew Nasho was as true as steel, and I was n't afraid to trust Cracklins. There was n't any doubt about our having the real right to the tunnel, but the thieves had posses-

sion of it, and I knew there was an old saying that possession was nine points in law. The first thing to do was to get them out, and get in again ourselves. I thought to myself, "You think you have played a sharp trick on a young greenhorn, but I think I'll show you a thing or two before you are done."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHARLEY STAMPEDES THE THIEVES OUT OF THE TUNNEL. THE CROWD FROM DEADWOOD. CHARLEY TELLS HIS STORY. THREE CHEERS FOR CAPT. CHARLEY. THE THIEVES GIVEN UNTIL SUN-DOWN TO LEAVE.

WHEN bedtime came, I asked Nasho to sit up and watch until eleven o'clock, and then to be sure and wake me up. He called me at eleven, and I sat up until two. My only reason for sitting up was to be sure to be awake at two. Then I waked up Nasho and Cracklins.

"I am going to get those thieving rascals out of our tunnel. Will you both follow me?"

"Me ready, Carley," said Nasho.

"Niggers ain't hardly ever wuth much when it comes to rite down fightin', but I'll jess do my bess, Mas Charley. Hain't nebber dun no fightin' wid guns an' pistols, but I hain't forgot you and Mas. Dick findin' ob me up a tree. I reck'ns I kin foller you, Mas Charley."

"I am very certain there won't be any fighting to do. We will take our guns, slip round on the far

side of the tunnel, and charge the villains, yelling and whooping like Indians, and firing off our guns, and those fellows will stampede out of there like scared bulls. Do you think you can yell like an Indian, Cracklins?"

"Bress yer soul, Mas Charley, I kin make any Injun in dese mountins shame ob hesef, ef I jess turns myself loose, an' I'm gwine ter do dat very ting. Dem fellers 'll tink dere's forty dozen Injuns 'bout ter jump square onter dere heds."

"That's all I want you to do, Cracklins; just yell like an Indian, and fire your gun off as fast as you can. Shoot into the air, and be sure you don't shoot Nasho or me, or into our camp, and kill a horse. Remember, when they run, you are not to shoot at them. I don't want to hurt them if they will get out of there, and I am certain all they will want, when they hear us, will be a fair chance to leave. Nasho, you take your bow and arrows, and let fly as fast as you can. You can handle the bow faster than I can. I don't care how close you shoot to them, and it won't be much matter if you hit one in the leg; it will only help to scare them worse, and make them certain it is Indians. Don't shoot to kill, though, and don't use your gun. I think with Cracklins I can keep up enough shooting to make them think there's half a band of Sioux on them."

"All right, Carley, me shoot arrow, and hit 'em in leg. S'pose dey no run?"

"Then, Nasho, I am going in there, and shoot in

earnest. They 've got to come out of there. I don't ask you to go with me, though."

"Me foller whereber you go, Carley. You fight, me fight too."

"Thank you, Nasho. I thought I could depend on you. I am certain, though, they will break when they hear us. Get your gun, Cracklins, and you too, Nasho. Better sling it over your shoulder, so it won't be in your way. Come on!"

I led them to the right place, and gave them stands about fifteen feet apart, telling them to wait until I gave the word, and then not to rush up too fast, so as to give the thieves time to get away. When I gave the word we started. There was such a terrible row I could hardly make out anything clearly. I could hear Nasho's sharp, shrill voice, and if I had been in camp and heard it coming, I would have been sure it was Indians. Cracklins fairly raised the woods. It did n't sound a bit like Indians, but it made noise enough for three men. We kept our rifles cracking lively. I heard one screech just after we started, but that was all. In a minute we were in the hole at the mouth of the tunnel. There was nobody there. As I had thought, they were too badly scared to do anything but stampede for town.

"De —— raskils run like scared wolf. Me hit one. Me hear him holler. He sure dat was Injuns."

"Did you see him, Nasho?"

"Me see someting in dark. No see good."

"Where did you hit him?"

"No can tell. It too dark. No kill him; he gone."

"Well, I hope not. Here we are. Cracklins, are you afraid to stay in camp by yourself?"

"Oh, no, Mas Charley. Wha' me be feerd ob? Nobody gwine trubbel me!"

"No, no one will trouble you, and you can call us any time, if anybody does come. Nasho and I will have to stay here until Capt. Dick comes back, and you must keep camp, and not let anybody meddle with anything there."

"All right, Mas Charley, me'll take care of camp. Nobody ain't gwine ter trubbel nuffin while I'se dar, an' ef white men cums round peekin' inter tings, I'll jess sing out, an' you kin run over an' straighten 'm out."

"You must keep the horses tied up to the wagon, and be sure you don't leave camp. One of us will come up in the morning to get our breakfast. Go to camp now, and take care of it for us. You've helped us a great deal to-night, and we won't forget you."

"Don't you be onesy 'bout camp, Mas Charley. I'll keep tings straight ober dere."

When he had gone, I said, —

"We had as well take it time-about to sleep some, Nasho. Those fellows will raise the town, but they will be certain it was Indians, and that they will be gone before they could get out here, and we won't see anybody until morning."

"S'pose dey git help to cum back, an' take deir mine?"

"They can't get it without whipping us out first, and they can't do that without more help than I think they will get in Deadwood. I will tell who ever comes with them just how they tried to steal our mine, and I don't believe anybody will help them. I don't want to fight, but we are in here, and I am going to stay till we are whipped out, and I think there will be somebody hurt before that comes. We have got cover and plenty of ammunition, and I'm not going to make any sham fight."

Nothing happened during the night, but as the sun was rising we saw forty or fifty men, some on horseback, but most of them on foot, coming directly toward our tunnel. As they came closer, I could see that the two scoundrels who had tried to steal our mine were with them in the lead. The rock-puncher I could not see. We lay low until they were in thirty yards. I got up and ordered them to halt, holding my rifle at a trail.

"What the devil does this mean?" asked a tall, grisly bearded miner in a red shirt, with a Sharp's rifle in his hand.

"It means just this, gentlemen. Last year, having been over the cattle trail, I was going back to Texas, and found a man lying by the roadside at Fort Dodge, almost frozen to death. I took him to a hotel, got a doctor, and did everything for him that could be done. He rallied enough to tell me that he had been a miner in the Black Hills, had taken out a good deal of gold, and that he had buried it here,

intending to come back and get it. He was taken sick, and if I had not found him would have died without anybody knowing anything about it. He made his will, and in it asked me to go to the Hills, dig up his dust, and give half to his little niece in Minnesota. The other half I was to have for my trouble. Then he died. I have that will, and a sketch of the place where he had buried his dust in my pocket. Will you come up and examine it, sir, and tell these gentlemen whether I am right or not?"

One of the thieves started with him. "Stop!" I said, "that thieving villain there can't come any nearer. Just wait, gentlemen, until I am through, and if I don't make my words good, let those two scoundrels settle the matter themselves."

"I reckon you had better hold on till I come back," said the red-shirted miner to the thief. In a mean, sneaking way, he stepped back.

The miner came up and read the will, and examined the sketch. I explained to him that the place had been buried under a land-slide, and we had dug it out.

"It's as straight a yarn as a preacher's prayer the young one has told us, men. Is there any lawyer in the crowd."

A black-bearded man, in blue shirt and one leg of his corduroy pants in his boots, stepped out, and said he had passed for a lawyer before he had turned fool and come to the mines.

"Then, if the young one is willing, I'll ask you

to come up here and see if this document is all setten'."

"One minute," said I, as the blue shirt and the other of the thieves started up. "There's a plan on foot, gentlemen, to steal this mine from the rightful owners. Those two thieves there are the scoundrels who are trying to do it. I know you, gentlemen, have nothing to do with it, but you see we are in possession of our own now, and I don't propose to give it up to anybody. I will be glad to have that gentleman examine this will as a lawyer, and tell you whether or not I am right, but it must be understood that both he and this gentleman here will leave then, and leave us in full possession. As I said before, if I don't make my words good, let those scoundrels there settle with me."

"All right, Texas, I ain't going to take any advantage of you," said the lawyer.

"An' I'll see that that's made good," added the grisly old miner at my side, nodding his curly head.

The lawyer came up and examined the will carefully. Then holding it up to the crowd, he spoke so that all could hear :—

"This document will hold water in court, gentlemen of the jury. It's all square, and it makes this young fellow here, if Charley Zanco is his name, the executor of Hugh Lenton, and charges him to go to the Hills, find his gold, and divide it with his little niece, Marion Lenton, in Minnesota. He's followed the record to a dot, so far."

"Maybe there is some one in the crowd that knew Hugh Lenton," I suggested to the old miner.

"Is there anybody down there that ever knew Hugh Lenton, in the Hills? It was afore I came here."

"Reckon I did, mister," spoke a fellow, of whom I could only see a hairy face under an old battered woollen hat. "I'm knowin' to the fact of his havin' been here in the Hills in 1875 and '76, but I never knowed he had struck it rich. Kep to himself mostly, an' never hed much to say to nobody. Think it got too cold for him here in the fall, an' he lit out to go farther south."

"Well, young one," said the old miner to me, "you are straight as a shingle so far, an' I reckon you had better give us some more of the same sort now. This gentleman here will leave us now."

The lawyer went back, and I continued, —

"My partner, who is now off on an Indian scout for the protection of miners in the Hills, and I, worked our way over the Trail, came here and sunk this shaft, because the place described in this sketch had been buried by a land-slide. You can see where it came from," pointing to the bluff.

"Speaks for itself, that does, gentlemen," nodded the old miner.

"Three days ago, a messenger came from town to see if anybody would go from our camp on an Indian scout. My partner, Capt. Dick, agreed to go. That evening we found the dust, and, but for his having

agreed to go, would have started home to-morrow. A negro, whom we had as cook, and who had been digging for us, came back to the shaft to dig while my partner was gone. I did not send him, because we had found what we had come for, and did not intend to mine, but I thought he had as well be digging as doing nothin'. He struck an old tunnel. A man whom my partner had hired in Deadwood to blast for us, and who had been lying round camp after his work was done, as a matter of favor to him, living off of us and welcome, went with me to this tunnel. He said the ore was very rich, and took specimens with him to have assayed. He did not come back again. I knew nothing of the mining laws, and did not put up any notice or file any claim. Of course we expected to work the tunnel. When I got up yesterday morning, and came to the tunnel, I found those two scoundrels there in it. They warned me off with guns in their hands, said they had filed a claim, and were going to hold it. I could do nothing then. Perhaps they can tell how they got out. We are in now, and we are going to stay. If any man who helped to run this tunnel in the first place will come forward and make good his claim, we are ready to give him everything that he is entitled to, if it leaves us out in the cold, but no thieves can come here and rob us in that style. I did not know what the law was, and, if I had known, I did n't have time to follow it, but I do know what justice is, and I believe this camp will sustain me in getting it. Am I right, gentlemen?"

"You are mighty right, Texas," cried half a dozen voices. Before anything else could be said, we were all surprised by a long burst of laughter from the old miner at my side. He laughed until he shook so he could not stand up, and then he sat down and laughed and shook. It looked as if he did not intend to stop.

"Hallo, Colonel!" cried the lawyer, "what's tickling you so powerfully? If it's as good as all that, you ought to let the rest of the crowd have a share."

"I've heard some rich things in my time," began the old man, without getting up, "and I've seen some good jokes played, but this just lays over anything for richness ever I come across. When them two coyotes down there," pointing to the two thieves, "came into camp with their story of having been run out of their claim by Injuns, and jist gittin' out with their lives, I believed them, because Blastin' Pete, who was with 'em, had an arrow through his thigh, and no mistake. Well, you see there ain't been nary an Injun anywhere round. Them derved coyotes put up a job to steal their claim from these young ones here, thinking they did n't know nothin' 'bout the law, and, only bein' boys, couldn't help themselves anyhow. What do the young ones do, but lie low until night, and then raise an Injun yell, and stampede the dratted thieves square out of their claim, and send 'em flyin' to camp. Reck'n Blastin' Pete thinks that's a purty rough joke.

It's the best thing ever I know'd in the mountains."

Springing to his feet, he swung his hat over his head, yelling, —

"Three cheers, men, for Capt. Charley!"

The men gave them with a will.

"That's the young one treated the crowd yesterday, but would n't give out no whiskey, ain't it?" asked one of the crowd.

"He's the identical chap."

"Then three more cheers for Capt. Charley, men."

And they followed him again.

"Now, gentlemen," said the old miner, "Capt. Charley is on the square; there's no two ways 'bout that. We've got nothing to do with his dividin' that dust squarely with Hugh Lenton's niece, but I'm plum certain he'll do that."

"You may be very certain of that, Colonel," interrupted I.

"I thought so," he went on, nodding his head; "I reckon Capt. Charley don't want any help to take care of his crowd against any set of thieves in these diggings. Ha! ha! ha!" And he chuckled again and again, muttering, "First time ever I heard of stampedin' a den of thieves. But I'm thinkin' Deadwood ain't got any use for no such sneakin' villains that would try to take the advantage of a boy, and steal what he had worked hard for, and that the sooner they cut dirt from these diggings the better for 'em. What do you say, gentlemen?"

"Reckon till sundown will be time enough for 'em to git their duds together and clar out," answered the hairy-faced man. "Time plenty," said a dozen more.

"Then you hear the sentiment of this camp, coyotes, an' be sure you follers it too, or it'll be the worse for you."

"Wait a minute, gentlemen, if you please," said I. "These thieves put up their notice, and, I expect, filed a claim for this tunnel. Now I don't admit that they ever had a shadow of a right to it; but, to make things sure, I want them to give my partner and me a clear title to it, as far as they are concerned, before they leave here."

"You are right about that, Capt. Charley," nodded the old miner. "Git your writin' tricks, an' we'll have it straightened out right here."

I sent Nasho over to camp in a hurry for my writing materials, and he came back with them directly.

"Hallo there, Mr. Lawyer!" called out the old miner, "just come up here and write out this little document, will you?"

He came up, sat down, and began to write. He stopped, and, looking at me, asked,—

"What consideration are you going to give them, Cap'n?"

"Nothing. They have no real claim at all."

"All the same, to make this document hold water it ought to call for some valuable consideration."

"Then just say 'for a valuable consideration,' Judge," suggested the old miner; "I reckon its valuable consideration enough that they did n't git their rotten hides full of arrers and bullets last night when the Indians charged 'em." And the old fellow fell to chuckling again.

"Yes, that will do," said the lawyer, "for a valuable consideration, without specifying it."

When he had finished it, the old miner called out, —

"Here, you pesky coyotes, come up here and put your fists to this document."

They came sneaking up as if expecting to be shot.

"Stand up, dern ye, you ain't a-going to be hung, if you do deserve it."

The lawyer read the transfer to them, and asked them if they signed it of their own free will and accord. They said they did, and signed it. The old miner and the lawyer signed it as witnesses. "Now," said the former, "I want you," speaking to the thieves, "to ask me to take this document to the recorder, and have it put on record."

They did so.

"Now you can go, and be sure you don't let sun-down catch you in this camp. Git!"

They were only too glad to get away.

"Now gentlemen," said I, "I can't thank you enough for your help in this thing. You must go over and take breakfast with us."

Going down to the crowd, I handed one of them fifty dollars, and asked him to treat for me, leaving

out any and every kind of liquor, and thanked them for the hearing they had given me."

With a hearty cheer for Capt. Charley, they went straggling back to town. The miner and the lawyer went over to camp with me.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CHARLEY MAKES GOOD THEIR CLAIM. CAPT. DICK'S
RETURN. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE. HIS LAST
LETTER.

WITH the help of the old miner I staked off our claim that day, and put up the notice. Then I employed the lawyer to draw up a notice in the name of Capt. Dick and myself, and put that on record in the recorder's office, with the transfer that I had got from the thieves. Before having that filed, though, I got the rock-puncher to sign it, and had it witnessed. He didn't want to see me at all, and looked as mean and sheepish as ever I saw a man. He was pretty badly shot through the thigh, but nobody seemed to feel any pity for him. In fact, the thieves getting stampeded, and one of them arrow-shot, was looked upon as a good joke.

I kept Nasho in the tunnel all day, for fear the thieves might sneak back and slip in. If they had I should certainly have taken my rifle, and run them out, but I didn't want to have any trouble that could be avoided. It is a great deal easier to keep out of trouble than to get out after you get in. The old

miner was so kind to me, and seemed so honest, that I told him about the twenty thousand dollars we had found first, and that we really wanted to find the owner, but did not care to say anything about it, until we had placed it in safety.

"And you are right about that, Cap'n. There's plenty of fellows in town yonder that, if they knew you had fifty thousand dollars here in camp, would try to stampede you, and if they could n't scare you out of it, would rob you, and put a hole through you beside. When are you looking for your partner back?"

"I think he will be back to-morrow night, or the next."

"Well, there ain't anything in my camp worth stealing. Just let me have one of your mules to ride, and I'll come over and stay with you at night till he gets back. Nobody is likely to trouble you in the daytime. Not that there ain't fellows that would be ready enough for any such devilment, but they know there are plenty of good men in camp that ain't going to stand such rascality."

As Nasho had to sleep in the tunnel at night, I was very glad to accept his offer.

The next evening Capt. Dick came. Was n't I glad to see him, though! He had had a long, hard ride through the roughest kind of mountain country but they had never come in sight of the Indians. While he ate dinner I told him all that had happened. I don't like to tell you what he said, but I was glad to know that he was satisfied.

"You have managed better than I would have done, Charley," said he, "because I'd have taken my rifle and run the infernal scoundrels out of there, and then very likely we would have got into trouble, while you have not only run them out of the mine, but clear out of camp. Nasho's a trump, ain't he? I'd like to have heard the row. I don't wonder the thieves thought Injuns were on 'em, particularly when that scoundrel of a rock-puncher felt that arrow in his leg. It would have served him right if it had gone through his body. I stopped to ask about that fellow I had the row with, and was glad to find he is getting well. I don't think these things will do us any harm, Charley. I don't want any reputation for being a bully, but we've got to stay here now and work our mine, and if it is known in camp that we know how to use our shooting-irons, and will use them if there is any necessity for it, there won't likely be any occasion for us to use them. You were exactly right in telling the whole story straight out, but I had rather the camp yonder did n't know anything about our having so much money here. The best thing now to do will be for you to start for Cheyenne to-morrow. We'll send the dust through by express. It is too heavy for you to carry, and that will be the safest. I would go with you, and we'd take care of it ourselves, but one of us has got to stay here and hold on to our mine. You bet I'm glad you have found it, but I'm rather let down about not taking the back track for Texas to-morrow, as I

had been calculating to do. When you get to Cheyenne, sell the dust and take drafts. You had better take the one for the thirty thousand on Chicago, and the other on St. Louis. Of course, the money must pay your travelling expenses and its own. That's nothing but right, and then you don't get anything for your time. When you get to St. Louis you had better sell the twenty-thousand draft for United States bonds, because they are safe, and will draw interest, and the money had better be making something than lying there, paying for safe keeping. Then you can go on to St. Paul's, pay the other draft over to Mrs. Lenton, and come back again."

"Capt. Dick, I've been studying over what we are going to do with this mine. It will take a good deal more money than we have got to get the machinery that will be necessary, and the water. How are we going to get the capital we need?"

"How do you know it will take machinery to work it?"

"Several who came up here to look at it said so, and that old miner says so too, and that we will need steady water-power."

"That twenty thousand would come in about right here. But mining is too uncertain to put another man's money into. We can risk our own. I'll tell you, Charley, we will have to take in partners that have got money, and form a company to run it, or else we will have to sell an interest in it. We'll call it the Cracklins Mine. You must take some speci-

mens of the ore with you, and leave at the banks at Cheyenne, and take some to St. Louis, too, and find out men who deal in mining stocks, and maybe you can get some that have money to come out and take a look. Neither of us know anything about mining. My idea is, our best plan will be to sell out a half-interest, and make the other party furnish the capital to run the concern. In that way we won't be out anything, and they can't freeze us out of our share. The men that find mines hardly ever get the benefit of them. We'll see if we can't be sharp enough to make something out of ours."

"Capt. Dick, how would it do to give that old miner a share, and take him? He seems to be straight-out honest, and to know a great deal about mining."

"A bully good idea, Charley, if he is square! I'll find out about him while you are gone, and you inquire about him, too, at Cheyenne. No honest man objects to having his character looked into, and we don't want to take in any rascal. I thought that rock-puncher was a trifling, honest, good-for-nothing sort of a fellow, and he was near stealing us out clear out of a mine."

When the old miner came over that evening, we persuaded him to stay all night. We had the best supper we could get up, and he told us a great many things about mining. After he had laid down, Capt. Dick and I had a talk about my going over to the Powder River country, to look up the mine that Mr.

Lenton found over there. The sketch is not clear and definite, and I have n't much hope of finding it, but I want to make the trial, anyhow. It is getting late in the season, and I will have to go as soon as I get back from Minnesota. Capt. Dick wants very much to go, too, because he don't want me to go alone ; but he will have to stay and look after our tunnel interest. I will take Nasho and a pack-mule, and we will go with the first crowd that leaves after I get back. The Indians have been very bad on the road, but just now Gen. Crook is after them, and they have gone on to the head waters of the Yellowstone and Milk Rivers. I start for Cheyenne to-morrow. I will be so busy that I may not write you again until I get back from Powder River, which will not likely be until winter sets in.

CHAPTER XXX.

YELLOWSTONE KELLY'S ACCOUNT OF A BIG INDIAN FIGHT. CAPTAIN CHARLEY FIGHTS LIKE A VETERAN. A TIGHT PLACE. THE PARTY COME BACK, AND REPORT CHARLEY MISSING IN A SNOW-STORM AT NIGHT. WHAT HAS BECOME OF HIM ?

DEADWOOD, Oct. 25, 1877.

MR. ARTHUR MORECAMP,
Philadelphia, Penn.

DEAR SIR, — Knowing that Charley has been writing to you about our trip, and that you had published in a book his adventures last year in going over the Cattle Trail and back to Texas in winter, I write to send you sad news. He went to St. Louis and Minnesota, and attended to all his business at both places, square up, as any man could have done. He brought me the nicest letter of thanks from Mrs. Lenton, for my share in helping to get little Marion's money, ever I read. Nobody but the best kind of a lady could have written it. I will show it to you if ever I see you, because I know you are a friend of Charley's.

A couple of bankers came from St. Louis with

him to look at our mine. They had a mining engineer with them to examine it, and make an estimate of how much he thought it ought to pan out. As that would take several days, and it was getting late in the season, Charley only staid one day with me, and then started with a crowd for the Powder River country, taking Nasho, and a pack-mule to carry their tricks. *That's the last I've seen of him.*

Four nights ago Yellowstone Kelly, one of the big scouts, came in on business for General Crook, and reported that he had been with a party from Deadwood who had been corralled by the Indians on the North Fork of the Belle Fourche, and had one of the hardest fights ever known on the plains. I went to see him, and give you his story as he gave it to me, as near as I can come it.

"You see, Cap'n, a little bunch of Injuns had been follering me so close that they could use their shootin'-irons pretty of'n, and finally they tumbled my mule. I was lyin' behind her doin' my best to keep 'em off, when that crowd came up, and the Injuns fell back. I got a mule from 'em and started on again, and they kept the track for Powder River. I did n't get more'n a mile before the Injuns began to crowd me so close that I seed I was n't goin' to get through, and I took the back track to get with that crowd again, thinking if I had to fight 'em I'd rather hav' company. When I got with 'em ag'in, an' it took right sharp management to make the raffle, I found the Injuns were pretty thick around

'em, and a-coming from every quarter. I can't make out where they 've been, but there they was, plenty of 'em, and no mistake. I seed they did n't intend to let us go without a scrimmage, and told the party we had better try and make cover where we could fight 'em to better advantage. There was considerable shootin' goin' on then, but we managed to git to a little willow island on a creek, and dug holes in the sand, an' throwed up the dirt around 'em so as to shelter ourselves the best we could, for the willows did n't 'mount to nothin'. I can tell every time how a man is goin' to pan out when I am goin' into a fight with him, and I seen at once that that little Capt. Charley, as they called him, an' the little Mexican with him, knowed what they were about. They made their horses lie down in a sort of little wallow, an' tied 'em so they could n't get up, and then they picked two of the best places in the layout back to back, and made their holes.

“The red devils were n't long in lettin' us know what they intended doin'. They come a yellin' an' a screechin' as if they were goin' to ride right over us, an' I reckon they would 'a' done it if we had n't made our rifles talk to 'em pretty lively. By good luck there were eight or ten Winchesters in the crowd, an' we slung lead at 'em pretty fast. I have seen a sharp bit of Injun fitin', but I never seen 'em charge as steadily as they did then. They would throw themselves behind their ponies, and dash up in thirty yards of us, emptying their pistols and guns as they

circled round us. If they had had a little more grit they could have run over us and lifted every scalp, but they would shy off and ride away again, yellin' an' screechin' like the very old devil. Our crowd was game, an' stood to 'em well, or we would all have been left on that little island. The best shootin' I've ever seen was done there. I know nearly all the best shots on the plains, and have seed most of 'em shoot, and I thought Charley Reynolds, that was rubbed out with Custer, could n't be beat, but I don't believe he could shoot with that little Capt. Charley. He just lay to the ground like a snake with his eye skinned, and never let a chance for a shot go by him, and if ever he missed I never seen him, and I watched him pretty close. Once an Injun who had just shot one of the crowd jumped up and let out a whoop, but it dropped into his death-yell before he hit the ground again. Charley caught him fair and square, and laid him out. I seen him get seven, and I never seen one that he shot at get up or move again, and I don't know how many he got when I was n't watchin'.

"The third day we begun to git pretty dern'd thirsty, particularly them that had been wounded, and the men and horses that had been killed stunk powerful. One poor fellow that was shot begged for water so hard, that Capt. Charley said if we would cover him, and throw lead into the Injuns lively when he made the dash, he would see if he could n't get some. There was a little pool not more than forty yards off, but the smart Injuns had stationed some of their

best shots where they could cover it, and it was as much as a man's life was worth to try to get to it. He took a couple of camp-buckets, and, as he made the dash, we turned loose all together on the Injuns that was watchin' the water. That sorter took 'em by surprise, and he got to the water, filled his buckets and started back before they begun to shoot much, but good Lord, how they did rain the bullets in then! I expected every minute to see him drop, but he got back without a scratch, and his buckets more'n half full of water. It was worth ten times as much as that much gold to us.

"The next day, when we were so worn out, we begun to think the Injuns were goin' to git us, anyhow; a crowd on their way from Powder River to Deadwood happened along, and the Injuns drew off and left us. Out of fifteen that went into that fight, six were lying cold and stiff, and five more were more or less hurt. One of 'em, I know, is bound to go under, and it is an even shave if another don't follow suit. Neither Capt. Charley nor the little Mexican had a scratch, owin' to their lyin' so close, and their horses weren't hurt, either, though most of the rest of the stock was finished off for good and all. I was in a hurry to git in, and got another critter and left. The rest are all comin' on together, bringin' on the wounded with them."

Yesterday the crowd got in, but neither Charley nor Nasho were with 'em, and it's a queer story they tell about Charley. They say he stood his guard the

night after the fight, and then laid down, and that's the last anybody ever saw of him. Next morning, when they got up, his overcoat and six-shooter were where his head had been, his rifle in his bed; even his hat was there—but he was gone. His horse was there, too.

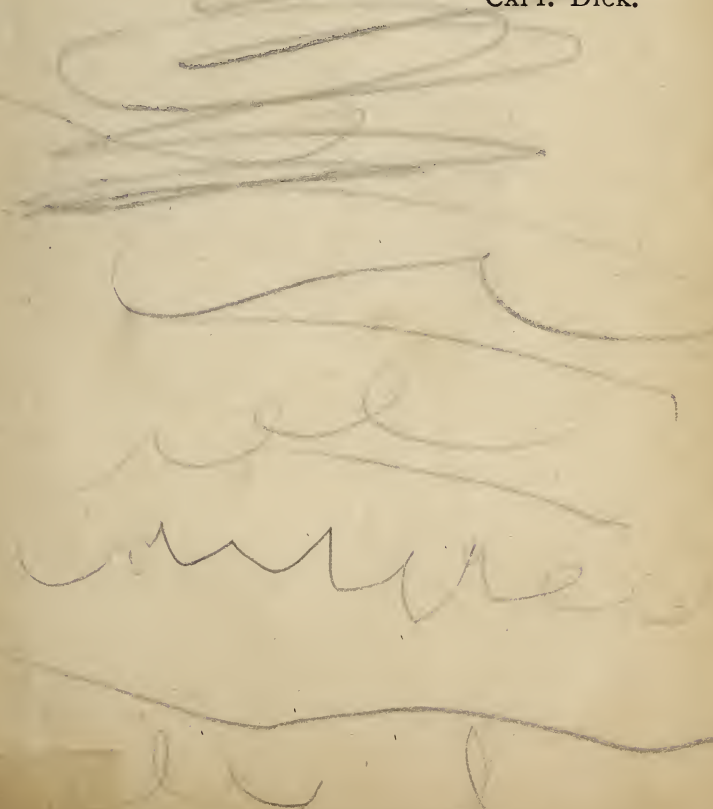
I've studied and studied about it, but I can't make out what could have made him leave camp in the night, without his hat and rifle. He could n't have been killed, or carried off, without somebody hearing the noise, and I can't figure up what he could have gone off by himself for. Nasho was sleeping with him, and he never waked him in getting up. I can't understand it no ways I can put it up. There was such a heavy snow fell that night, that next morning everything was buried up, and there was no sort of a chance to do anything tracking. Nasho struck out on a scout by himself, but he can't do anything until the snow melts, and then the chances are the tracks can't be seen on the grass. It is the strangest case I ever heard of. Nobody can make out what could have induced him to leave camp at night in a snow-storm, without his hat and weapons. I am terribly uneasy about him, but I have the strongest kind of hope that he'll turn up all right yet. I'd feel a heap more uneasy if I did n't know he was so well able to take care of himself.

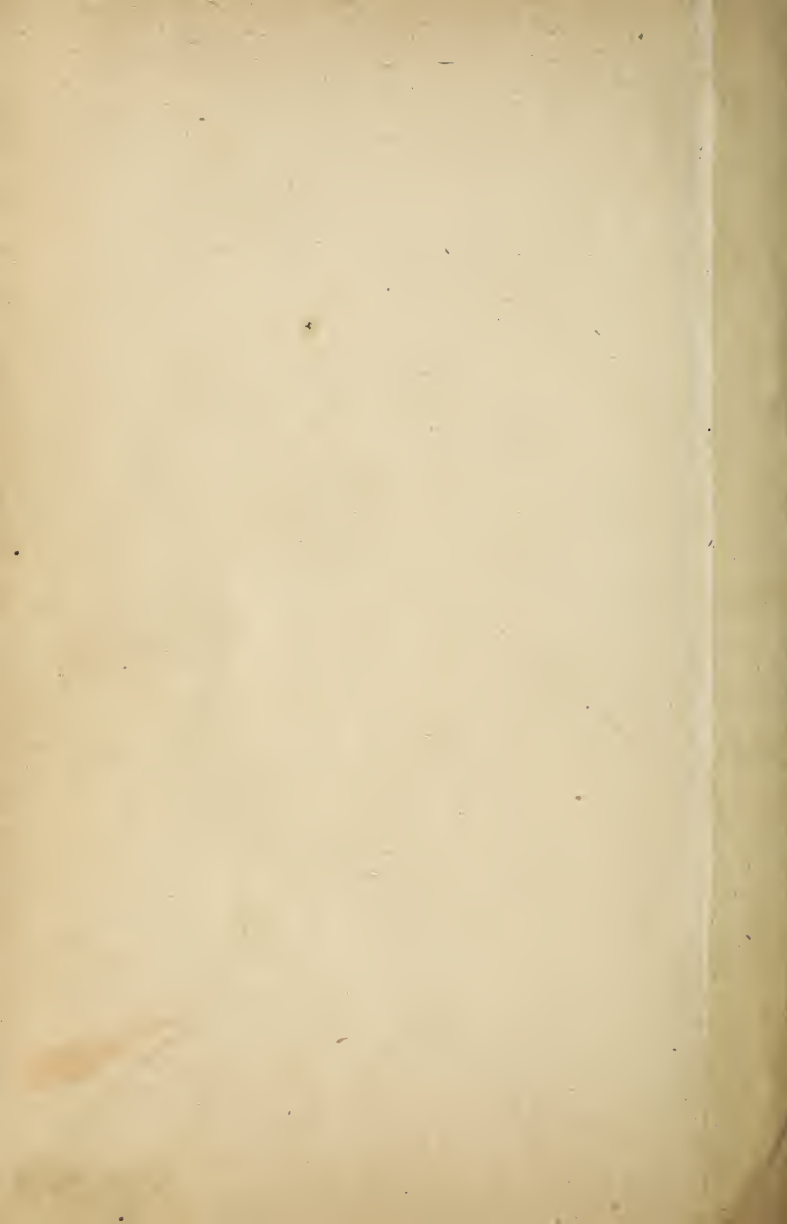
P. S. — Nasho has just come in almost frozen, and not a word about Charley. He could n't find a track, of course, and he has n't any idea what could have

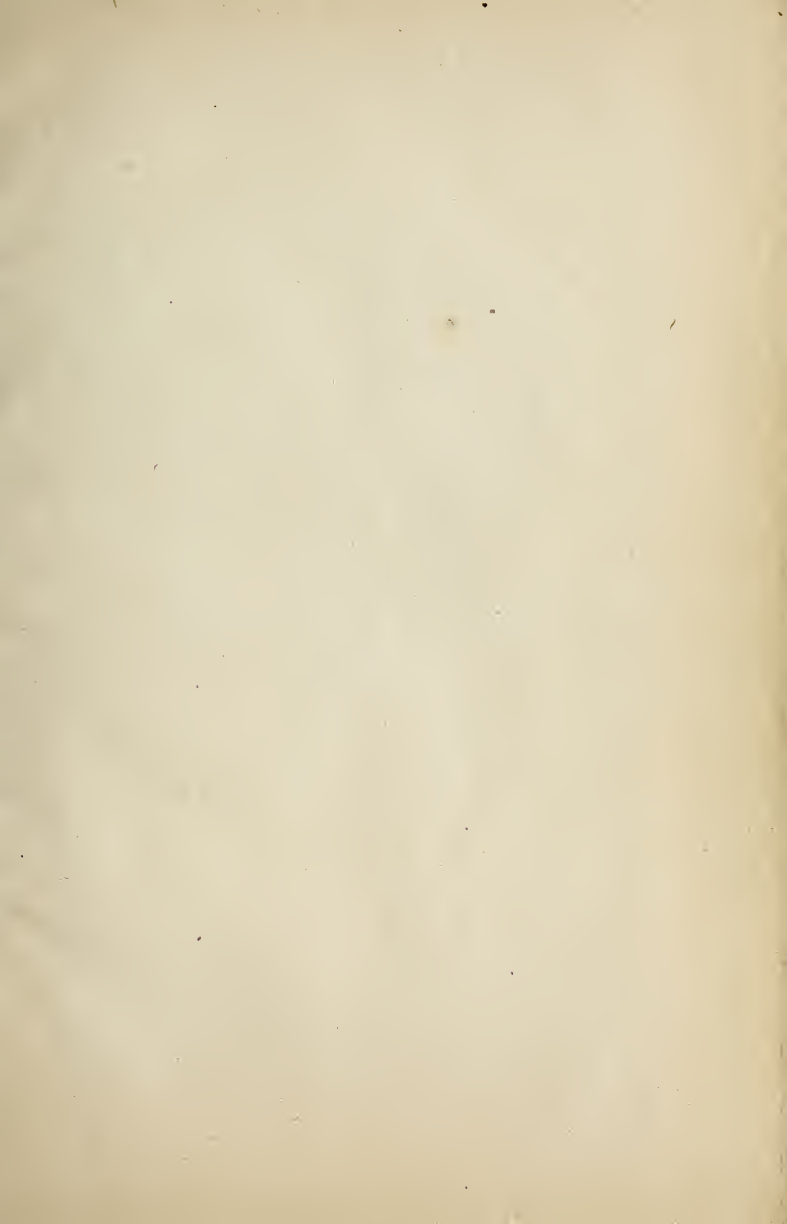
become of him. As soon as the snow melts I am going to take Nasho, and see what we can do, and I don't calculate to do anything else until I know what's become of him. If I only knew where he is, I'd be better satisfied, even if the Indians had him. I'll write to you just as soon as I hear from him, and the Lord send that that won't be long.

Yours truly,

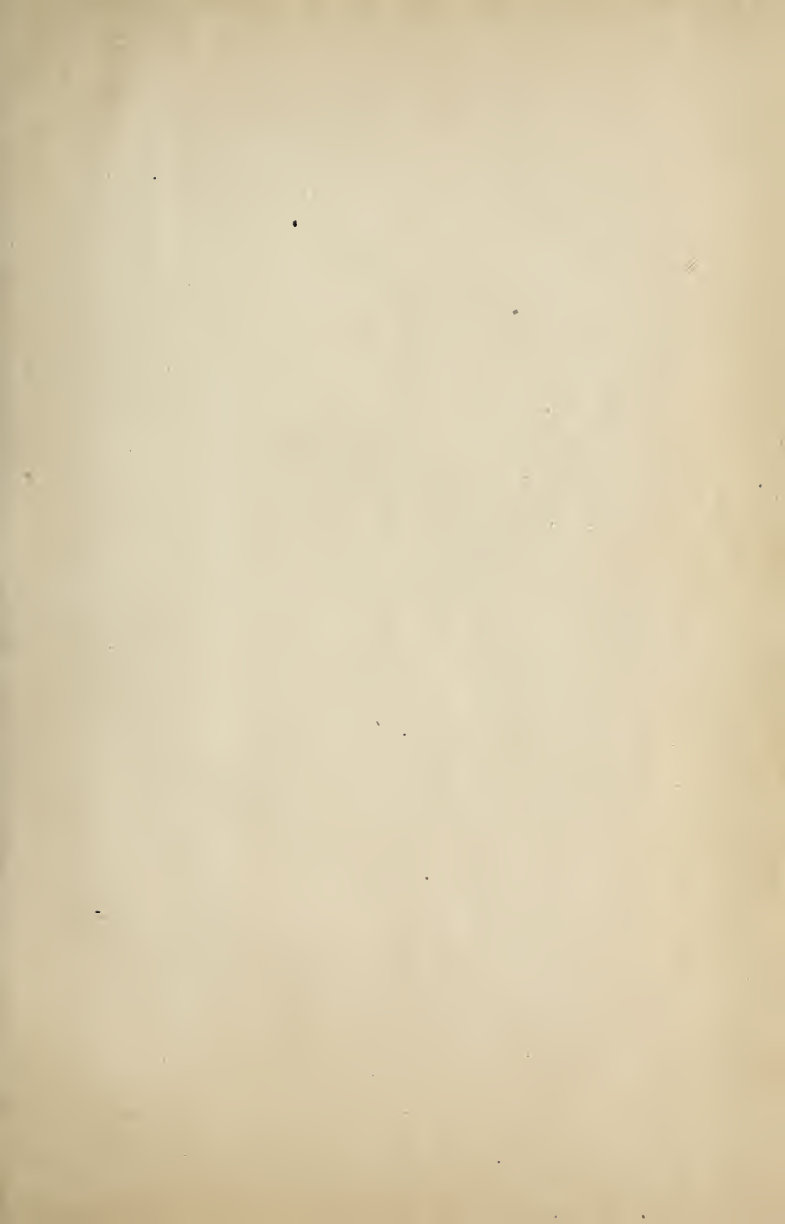
CAPT. DICK.











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OCT 12

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